A Road Map for Learning

Improving Educational Outcomes in Foster Care

A FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION PRACTICE FROM CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS

casey family programs
fostering families. fostering change.

About Casey Family Programs

Casey Family Programs' mission is to provide and improve—and ultimately to prevent the need for—foster care.

Established by United Parcel Service founder Jim Casey, the Seattle-based national operating foundation has served children, youth, and families in the child welfare system since 1966.

The foundation operates in two ways. It provides direct services, and it promotes advances in child-welfare practice and policy.

Casey collaborates with foster, kinship, and adoptive parents to provide safe, loving homes for youth in its direct care. The foundation also collaborates with counties, states, and American Indian and Alaska Native tribes to improve services and outcomes for the more than 500,000 young people in out-of-home care across the U.S.

Drawing on four decades of front-line work with families and alumni of foster care, Casey Family Programs develops tools, practices, and policies to nurture all youth in care and to help parents strengthen families at risk of needing foster care.

For more information about this framework, contact Casey Family Programs at 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109.

Visit our Web site at www.casey.org.

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STADIUM
HIGH SCHOOL

Framework at a Glance

Helping youth in out-of-home care to achieve a successful education is a cornerstone of our practice at Casey Family Programs. Success requires knowledge and collaboration across the child welfare, legal, and education systems at all levels—local, state, and federal.

This framework is set up in a modular format to encourage quick access to the eleven key education objectives that we target and the practices and resources that we support for attaining them.* For ease of reference, we've grouped the objectives into five subsets, according to the general issues they address:

School transfer issues

1. Provide school placement stability.
2. Secure and maintain accurate and accessible school records.

Collaboration and training issues

3. Facilitate collaboration and training among all involved systems.
4. Train caregivers to be education advocates at school and at home.

Supports and services issues

5. Provide education advocates and education specialists/advocates.
6. Give youth access to supplemental education supports and services.
7. Address special education needs as appropriate to the youth.
8. Decrease disparate outcomes for youth of color.

Preparation issues

9. Ensure that youth are literate, acquire basic skills, and have extracurricular opportunities.
10. Prepare youth to achieve their postsecondary education, training, and career goals.

Public policy issues

11. Promote public policies that support education during and after care.

The framework provides a combination of background information plus almost fifty practical applications that Casey field staff, or anyone involved with serving youth in care, can use in developing a holistic, comprehensive, and culturally responsive approach to education.

*The material in this framework draws from many sources, including field work and research; the Federal Child and Family Services Reviews, Section WB2; and the Council on Accreditation (COA) for Children and Family Services' standards.

How to Use This Framework

This framework emphasizes the K–12 population. It also touches on the education issues of the preschool population and youth who have emancipated from care.

We designed the framework to be modular, so it can be used as both a practical and an educational tool by anyone who works with the education needs of youth in out-of-home care. We intend it to be particularly useful for Casey's own education specialists.

We encourage you to choose whichever objectives and tools serve the most critical areas for your specific clientele and community, as well as those that help you explore ways to improve your overall services, support, and systems.

The framework also serves as a resource for informing others about the unique education needs of youth in out-of-home care.

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What you'll find in each objective

Each education objective in this framework has the following components:

- **Background**—supporting information, statistics, and studies that explain the issues behind the objective. Because educating youth in care is a holistic endeavor that has many intersections of service, supports, and challenges, we've added cross-references to other education objectives that may provide relevant additional information.

- **Promising Practices and Resources**—a list of services and supports that have been successfully applied by Casey or others to attain the particular objective. For quick identification, the names of these practices and resources are in ***bold-italic*** type. Details and contact information for each entry are in section 2.

- **Handouts and Checklists**—one or more ready-made materials that others have found useful in achieving the education objective. These documents can be found in section 3 for photocopying and distribution.

- **Other Recommended Resources**—a list of books, papers, Web sites, and legislation that may be relevant to the education objective.

- **What You Can Do Now**—actions that you can immediately apply to your own clientele to help attain the objective. These are divided into three categories of successively expanding spheres of influence:

    1. *Direct Services to youth and families*
    2. *Supports and Technical Assistance* for other providers, partners, and families

3. *System Improvements*, for advancing local, state, and national efforts to support the education of youth in out-of-home care

Underlying Principles

For youth in out-of-home care, education has the potential to be a positive counterweight to abuse, neglect, separation, and impermanence. Positive school experiences enhance their well-being, help them make more successful transitions to adulthood, and increase their chances for personal fulfillment and economic self-sufficiency, as well as their ability to contribute to society.

School also provides the opportunity for youth to form lasting connections with adults and to experience the benefits of participation in extracurricular activities. School "connectedness" has been found to be a protective factor against every health risk except

A Reminder to Casey Employees

Casey Family Programs is a private operating foundation and, as such, we cannot carry out any lobbying activities. When implementing any suggestions and practices in this framework, please remember:

1. Any time you communicate with or educate federal, state, or local legislators or other government officials, you may not refer to specific legislation (whether enacted, pending, or proposed) in a way that implies that Casey takes a particular view on the legislation.
2. Any time you communicate with or educate the general public, you may not refer to specific legislation (whether enacted, pending, or proposed) in a way that reflects any particular viewpoint on the legislation or that encourages the listener or reader to take a particular action about the legislation (such as contacting a legislator).

Positive school experiences enhance their well-being, help them make more successful transitions to adulthood, and increase their chances for personal fulfillment, economic self-sufficiency, and their ability to contribute to society.

pregnancy.[1] And as the Child Welfare League of America states, "for youth leaving the child welfare system, education is their best hope of achieving independence in adulthood."[2]

Five principles underlie the objectives in this framework:

- **Youth in out-of-home care must be the primary voice in education decisions.** We must teach youth to have an active voice, and we must listen to that voice as appropriate for the youth's age, development, safety, and well-being when establishing education plans. This includes providing age-appropriate tools and strategies to help youth express their capabilities and desires, as well as soliciting their input on the supports, outcomes, and goals they follow to realize their dreams.
- **School success requires addressing a mix of variables.** Education plans must consider the youth's cognitive abilities, emotional needs, home influences, motivation, and peer influence, as well as the quality of the school the youth attends. Additionally, plans must include developmentally age-appropriate activities that give youth the chance to play, have fun, and live normalized lives.
- **Education planning must incorporate practices that are predictors of education success.** Factors such as school placement stability, employment experience, a positive relationship with agency staff, and plans for postsecondary or career options are strong predictors that a student will complete high school.[3] The more of these positive factors we can build into a youth's education plan, the better for the youth.
- **Youth need education services and supports that build skills for economic self-reliance.** This means helping youth develop life-preparation skills in all areas of life, including completion of a high school diploma or GED and postsecondary or vocational training.
- **Education systems must partner with as many individuals and agencies as possible on behalf of youth in out-of-home care.** Formal and informal collaborators include birth parents, foster parents, kinship caregivers, schools, teachers, child welfare agencies, communities of faith, the judiciary, and agencies that serve youth who have emancipated to independent living and employment.[4]

[1] Resnik et al. (1997).
[2] Yu, Day, & Williams (2002a), p.xii.
[3] Burley & Halpern (2001).
[4] U.S. General Accounting Office (1999).

Section 1

1 Provide School Placement Stability

Background

Studies have shown that the longer a youth is in out-of-home care, the greater the number of home placements he or she is likely to experience.[6] Furthermore, a change in home placements is quite often accompanied by a change in schools.

The educational impact of every school change is significant. Each time youth enter a new school, they must adjust to different curricula, different expectations, new friends, and new teachers. They frequently suffer disruptions in valuable education services, such as special education support, counseling, enrichment programs, and extracurricular opportunities. And they often lose days or even weeks of schooling due to enrollment delays or temporary placement in emergency care, where they are held out of school pending a more permanent placement.

Reports from youth and foster parents highlight the urgency of this issue. Consider the following statements taken from focus groups conducted by the Youth Law Center in California:

- I was in eighth grade for two months, doing well, but then was moved 11 times in nine months. It was almost impossible to go to school. During the first three moves, I stayed in the same school, but after that, I changed districts and had to change schools.
- I was in 52 placements. I did not do eighth grade, but went to a charter school, where the principal let me in, and went to summer school there.
- I have been in 47 placements, through three agencies. I did not have a lot of school options. I kept talking to social workers and eventually got to go to [a] regular school.
- The system abuses foster children further, moving them from one educational placement to another. Time after time, I [a foster parent]

> “Perhaps the single most important thing that each of us can do to improve the educational outcomes for foster children is to ensure that their school placement remains stable. Historically, change of placement of the child has meant an almost automatic change of school. Yet for every school change, a child experiences serious loss and suffers academically.[5]”

[5] Heybach & Winter (1999), p. 3.
[6] Yu, Day, & Williams (2002a).

> have seen kids [who are] two weeks from graduation, and the social worker moves them.[7]

Casey's 2003 national study of its alumni, one of the few studies of its kind, underscores the link between home placement stability (with its corresponding school placement stability) and a youth's academic success. This study of more than 1,000 alumni shows that youth who had one or fewer home placements per year were twice as likely to graduate from high school before leaving care.[8]

Other studies of the general population have found correlations between a lack of school placement stability and academic performance:

- A 1993 study reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that frequent school changes were associated with an increased risk of failing a grade in school and of repeated behavior problems.[9]

- A study by researchers at the University of Chicago found that by the sixth grade, students who had changed schools four or more times had lost approximately one year of educational growth.[10]

- A 1999 study by researchers at the University of California at Berkeley found that high school students who changed schools even once were less than half as likely to graduate, even when controlling for other variables that affect high school completion.[11]

The federal government is using school placement stability as a factor in considering how well states meet the required Child Well-being Outcome for education. The federal Child and Family Services Reviews found that 21 of the 37 states examined so far need to increase school placement stability for youth who are experiencing home placement changes.[12]

Of course, no one advocates that youth remain in schools that are unsafe, or that provide an inferior education, simply for the sake of school placement stability. However, youth deserve as much school stability as we can give them. We must work with education and child welfare systems to eliminate enrollment barriers and other delays that create unnecessary disruptions in a youth's schooling. Social workers should be educated about the importance of school placement stability to a youth's well-being as they make home placement decisions. Likewise, youth themselves should be educated about, and involved in, decisions about changes in their home and school placements.

As the Youth Law Center of California notes,'"the stability of education placement must

[7] Burrell (2003), pp. 3, 4.
[8] Pecora et al. (2003), p. 44.
[9] Wood, Halfon, Scarlata, Newacheck, & Nessim (1993).
[10] Kerbow (1996), p. 20.
[11] Rumberger, Larson, Ream, & Palardy (1999), p. 3.
[12] Christian (December 2003), p. 3.

become a core value of systems for youth in child welfare and juvenile justice, and that value must be implemented in policy."[13]

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see section 2.

Endless Dreams Training and Video (page 89). This training curriculum shows educators how their schools can support students who are in out-of-home care and conveys the importance of keeping youth in stable school placements. When used to recruit teachers as temporary foster parents, the curriculum could also help youth stay in the same school for the remainder of a school year.

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 88). These practitioners provide education case-management and advocacy services for youth in out-of-home care. They are trained to educate schools about the importance of school placement stability. Their proactive planning with schools decreases the likelihood of suspensions and expulsions for these youth.

Seattle Foster Care and Education Consortium (page 109). The consortium offers a model for retaining youth in care in their present school and provides a framework to help school districts and social welfare agencies collaborate effectively.

Treehouse (page 116). This Seattle program places tutors in schools to provide academic support and advocacy to students in foster care.

K–12 School Placement Guide (page 98). From Casey, this program gives a protocol for school placement decisions and could also be used for guiding home placement decisions.

Neighborhood Foster Care (page 102). This model provides an avenue for keeping youth in their community and home schools.

Washington State Report to the Legislature, "Coordinated Services and Educational Planning for Children in Out-of-Home Care" (page 120). This report recommends that youth in short-term placements remain in their home schools. The report also includes other recommendations related to school placement stability for all youth in out-of-home care.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (page 101). This act includes provisions for youth in foster care and, in some instances, may be used to maintain a child in his or her home school.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this objective.

[13] Burrell (2003), p. 18.

See also

Education Objective 2, for more information on securing and maintaining records to ensure school attendance once a youth is moved to a new school

Education Objective 3, for more information on working across systems to ensure that all systems are working toward school placement stability

Education Objective 5, for more information on how education advocates and education specialists/ advocates can speak out for keeping youth in their current school, regardless of home placement changes

Education Objective 11, for promoting public policies related to school placement stability

Other Recommended Resources

None for this objective.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Ensure and advocate for school placement stability for youth in out-of-home care within schools, with judges, and with local public and private child placement agencies with authority to place youth.
- Use the ***K–12 School Placement Guide*** when making school placement and home placement decisions.
- Become educated on the ***McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*** provisions for youth where they are in a youth's best interests.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Give ***Endless Dreams Training and Video*** presentations to schools, local teacher unions, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), and school boards.
- Train social work staff about the need for school placement stability for youth in out-of-home care.

System Improvements

- Initiate interagency school district projects to improve school stability for youth in out-of-home care using the work of the ***Seattle Foster Care and Education Consortium*** as a model.
- Develop a state-level initiative to educate legislators on the importance of school stability, using the ***Washington State Report to the Legislature, "Coordinated Services and Educational Planning for Children in Out-of-Home Care"*** as a resource.
- Work with your state's foster parent association and child welfare agency to develop state foster parent recruitment strategies that use models such as ***Neighborhood Foster Care*** and the recruitment of foster families via school PTAs.

2 Secure and Maintain Accurate and Accessible School Records

Background

Negative school experiences of youth in out-of-home care are shaped not only by frequent school changes but also by misplaced, delayed, inaccessible, or incomplete education records.[15] Even the federal government acknowledges in its Child and Family Services Reviews that "availability of school records" is one factor they consider in judging how well a state is meeting the Child Well-Being Outcome for education. In 18 of the 37 states reviewed, education records were missing from case files or had not been made available to foster parents.[16]

Specifically, the problems are as follows:

- **Inefficient data management in child welfare systems** for maintaining up-to-date and complete education records for youth in out-of-home care.
- **Lengthy delays in transferring records** between schools and districts and across states. Affected records include individual, cumulative, and special education files, such as report cards, transcripts, student assessment scores, records of behavior infractions, health records required for school enrollment, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and Section 504 plans.
- **Loss of school records.**
- **Failure of school records to include full information about a youth's situation**, such as details about his or her in-care status, legal status, and the roles of birth parents, foster parents, and social workers who are acting on the youth's behalf.
- **Barriers to information sharing between education and child welfare systems**, including confidentiality requirements (see the box on page 14) and incompatible information-management systems.

The inability to secure and maintain a youth's school records can adversely affect a youth's academic progress in several ways.

First, youth are often denied school enrollment if they do not have all their records. Second, even if a school will allow late enrollees, delays in records transfer can postpone a youth's

> Improving the reliability of information shared among foster parents, schools, court officers, and caseworkers could help prevent the fragmentation of educational support for foster youth.[14]

[14] Burley & Halpern (2001), p. 30
[15] Yu, Day, & Williams (2002a).
[16] Christian (December 2003), p. 4.

start date, meaning more missed school days. Group homes in California, for instance, report enrollment delays of days or even weeks as youth wait for their records to arrive.[17] When school changes are frequent, the number of lost school days becomes significant. High school students in particular can lose valuable academic credit, which in turn can delay their graduation.

And third, a lack of accurate and complete records creates discontinuity and inadequacies in school programming. Caregivers, social workers, teachers, judges, and attorneys simply do not have the information they need about a youth's school experience to help them determine appropriate school programming as a youth moves from school to school.

The Challenge of Confidentiality

Confidentiality can be a large stumbling block when trying to maintain and share accessible records. The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 states that a youth's education records cannot be released to a third party without the written consent of the parent. "Parent" is defined to include "a natural parent, a guardian, or an individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or guardian."[18]

However, exceptions to FERPA state that education records may be released without prior parental consent to:

- Other school officials, including teachers, who have legitimate interest in the youth
- Appropriate persons in connection with a health or safety emergency
- Officials of other schools when a student is transferring schools
- Appropriate persons when release of information is needed to comply with a judicial order or subpoena[19]

For youth who are *within the child welfare system*, confidentiality provisions depend on state law and can be problematic even though they are designed to protect the youth's privacy. For example, in some states, child welfare systems cannot tell school systems the names of youth who are in out-of-home care.

When in doubt, contact your state's Office of the Attorney General for rulings and clarification.

[17] American Institutes for Research (2003), p. 9.
[18] McNaught (2003), p.6.
[19] McNaught (2003).

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see section 2.

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 88). These practitioners can ensure timely records transfer by overseeing records transmittal from agency to school, or from school to school, often by delivering the records themselves. Such services are often integrated into larger service and support programs offered by various states.

Seattle Foster Care and Education Consortium (page 109). The three primary goals of this consortium are to share data between the Division of Children and Family Services and the Seattle Public Schools in order to identify youth in out-of-home care; to trigger a timely records transfer each time a youth moves to a new school; and to convene an interdisciplinary planning meeting for school and child welfare staff for all students in out-of-home care.

Foster Youth ePassport (page 90). This database was developed to help youth and their service providers keep placement, health, education, and demographic records of youth in out-of-home care. It expedites school placements, reduces gaps in education from overlooked services, and improves the availability of academic records for schools and agencies.

Washington State Report to the Legislature, "Coordinated Services and Educational Planning for Children in Out-of-Home Care" (page 120). This report includes a subcommittee report on the effect of confidentiality statutes on sharing school records. Although the information is specific to Washington state, the report can serve as a guide for other states interested in clarifying this issue.

California Assembly Bill 490, "Helping Foster Children Make the Grade" (page 79). California has made many strides in promoting records-sharing across agencies. This important piece of legislation is a useful model for other states wishing to do the same.

American Bar Association Child Law Practice Series (page 76). This series of six articles from the ABA *Child Law Practice* journal has important information on confidentiality, records review, and the legal rights of youth in care.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this objective.

Other Recommended Resources

Lost in the Shuffle Revisited: The Education Law Center's Report on the Education of Children in Foster Care in Pennsylvania. This 2002 report includes practice and

See also

Education Objective 3, for more information on training school staff and educators about the need for timely records transfer

Education Objective 10, for more information on retrieving academic credits for youth in out-of-home care

policy recommendations for improving the transfer of education records and information on youth in out-of-home care. Available online at www.elc-pa.org (Education Law Center—Pennsylvania).

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Ensure that youth's records are transferred in a timely manner and that school districts adhere to legal guidelines for transferring records and enrolling youth. Help others (e.g., teachers, school secretaries) learn about the need for quick records transfer.

- Give youth self-advocacy training on the importance of their school records, how to keep a personal academic portfolio, and how to access official transcripts from schools.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Provide information and training on federal and state guidelines to schools, social workers, and caregivers.

- Train school district personnel on reading other districts' transcripts and IEPs, as they often vary by district.

System Improvements

- Initiate a local consortium and project based on the model developed by the ***Seattle Foster Care and Education Consortium***.

- Initiate a local or state model for improving the maintenance and sharing of education records based on the recommendations contained in *Lost in the Shuffle Revisited: The Education Law Center's Report on the Education of Children in Foster Care in Pennsylvania* (see "Other Recommended Resources" above)."

- Make a request to your state's Office of the Attorney General for clarification on federal and state laws and regulations regarding confidentiality. The process used in the ***Washington State Report to the Legislature, "Coordinated Services and Educational Planning for Children in Out-of-Home Care"*** could provide guidance on how to proceed.

Collaboration and Training Issues

3 Facilitate Collaboration and Training Among All Involved Systems

Background

Reports or studies on the education issues of youth in out-of-home care consistently point out that increased collaboration and cross-training among the three major systems involved with these young people—child welfare, education, and judiciary—is critical at the local, state, and national levels.[21]

Effective collaboration means working together to maintain school placement stability, share a youth's pertinent information and records, and ensure a youth's timely enrollment in school. It can also guarantee that youth in out-of-home care receive all the other education services they need.

Through collaboration, for example, a social worker might refer a youth for special education assessment, whereupon the school would obtain the assessment and hold a meeting to discuss the results, and a judge might then request information on whether there was appropriate follow-up.

Interagency protocols, preferably supported by appropriate level regulation, are essential to creating a comprehensive, effective collaborative system. Complete procedures for accountability should also be part of the protocols for each system.

As described by the Child Welfare League of America, collaboration should take place at the local, state, and federal levels. At the local level, service providers should work with at least one other system, such as the courts, child welfare system, or local school district, to evaluate system-wide challenges for youth in out-of-home care. These might include sharing information and solutions. At the state level, greater collaboration must occur between the state Department of Education and the state child welfare agency. At the federal level, the departments of Education and Health and Human Services should work closely together to develop federal policies and programs that improve the academic achievement of youth in care. [22]

Interagency collaboration does, of course, require training each group involved. For instance, child welfare agencies (including tribal councils) need training in the following:

- The importance of education success to a youth's well-being, safety, and successful transition to adulthood

> "The challenge for all systems is to ensure a positive school experience for these youth that will result in each young person's achieving his or her individual potential. No agency, school, or school district can solve the problem alone. Committed leadership and cooperation, communication, and collaboration among the various agencies are necessary to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for children and youth in care."[20]

[20] Yu, Day, & Williams (2002a), p. 36.
[21] Yu, Day, & Williams (2002a).
[22] Yu, Day, & Williams (2002a).

- How the education system works and its related legal issues
- The best methods to promote a youth's education success (e.g., attendance at school meetings, accessing supplemental education resources, ensuring that a youth's mental health needs are managed)
- The importance of school placement stability and its role in home and school placement decisions
- The institutional, social, and structural barriers that may prohibit good collaboration (e.g., institutional racism and stereotypes about the foster care system)

Educators need training in the following:

- How and why youth get into out-of-home care
- Foster care policies and how they affect the operation of the child welfare system
- The roles of social workers, birth parents, foster parents, and other caregivers in making education decisions
- How to develop empathy and avoid stigmatizing youth in out-of-home care
- Specific ways they can support the education success of youth in out-of-home care
- The unique emotional, practical, behavioral, social, intellectual, and academic challenges faced by youth in care, and how to respond to them
- How the disparate outcomes for children of color in the child welfare and judicial systems affect the education system

Attorneys, judges, parole and probation officers, juvenile detention staff, court-appointed special advocates (CASAs), and guardian ad litems (GALs) need training in the following:

- The importance of education success to a youth's well-being, safety, and successful transition to adulthood
- How court expectations and standards influence the ways social workers, educators, and other service providers respond to a youth's education needs
- How to adequately assess a youth's education progress and spot any concerns
- Effective methods of advocacy for a youth's education needs within the constraints of their appointed roles

Ideally, interagency training encourages participants to freely share their knowledge and identify barriers in a way that respects each agency's authority, expertise, responsibilities, roles, and accountability. Trainers need to be prepared to facilitate and negotiate potential areas of conflict while keeping the needs of the youth at the center of the discussion.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see section 2.

Endless Dreams Training and Video (page 89). This comprehensive curriculum can be used to train members of the child welfare, education, and judicial systems in many of the topics listed above, leading them toward greater collaboration and youth education advocacy.

Make a Difference in a Child's Life and ***Toolkit for Change*** (page 99). This education advocacy training program provides information on the education rights of youth in schools and how to advocate for these rights. The *Toolkit for Change* is a template that enables the training materials to be adapted to other states' laws.

Judicial Checklist: Critical Questions and Strategies for Meeting the Education Needs of Children and Youth in Juvenile and Family Court (page 97). This checklist (available in September 2004) will provide judges with information and questions to ask to determine the education needs and progress of youth for whom they have judicial responsibility.

Foster Youth Services, San Diego (page 91). This California program unites a variety of agencies and systems that work together to establish best practices for meeting the education needs of youth in group homes in San Diego County.

American Bar Association Child Law Practice Series (page 76). This series of six articles from the ABA *Child Law Practice* journal can guide parents, caregivers, attorneys, social workers, and education advocates in ways to work together to speak up for the education needs of youth in the child welfare system.

Handouts and Checklists

A sample of this item is available for photocopying in section 3.

"Things Teachers Can Do to Support Good Educational Outcomes for Students in Out-of-Home Care." This information sheet was developed by the Casey Family Programs National Center for Resource Family Support as part of a toolkit for National Foster Care Month. In addition to providing teachers with strategies for supporting youth in care educationally, it identifies other people and agencies they can work with to support positive outcomes for youth.

See also

Education Objective 1, for more information on how to ensure school placement stability and the roles that different systems must play

Education Objective 2, for more information on how to share records across systems

Education Objective 6, for how systems can work together to ensure youth have access to supplemental education supports and services

Education Objective 11, for more information on ways that systems can collaborate at the local, state, and federal levels

Ideally, interagency training encourages participants to freely share their knowledge and identify barriers in a way that respects each agency's authority, expertise, responsibilities, roles, and accountability.

Other Recommended Resources

Charlotte Mecklenburg School System Collaboration. Exemplary in its collaborative activities, this North Carolina group combines the efforts of the Mecklenberg County Department of Social Services/Youth and Family Services and the Charlotte Mecklenberg School System. Their joint initiative has developed several cross-agency programs that include staff cross-training, after-school tutoring programs, and psychological evaluations for youth who are returning from residential treatment. A write-up is available at www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss (North Carolina Department of Health and Services, Division of Social Services, under County Partners).

Handbook for Caregivers and Social Workers. Developed by Casey's San Diego office, this handbook can be used to teach both social workers and caregivers about education advocacy skills, the roles they each play in the education process, how to work with birth and/or legal parents, and how to work with the special education system. Contact: Casey Family Programs—San Diego, 3878 Old Town Avenue, Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92110-3023, (619) 543-0774.

National Symposium on Improving Educational Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care. This symposium of national leaders in the child welfare, judiciary, and education systems developed recommendations for practices and policies that are predicated on collaboration. These recommendations provide a resource and blueprint for future efforts across systems. Contact: Susan Weiss, Director—Community/Alumni Relations, Casey Family Programs, 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109, (206) 282-7300, sweiss@casey.org.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Train youth in how to communicate their needs and goals in a way that promotes better understanding among the various agencies and people who work with them. Train staff in how to listen to and support the needs of youth.

- Ensure that all the professionals involved in decisions about a youth's education success and transition have opportunities to share their expertise and plan collaboratively.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Provide training to judges, CASAs, and GALs, using the ***Judicial Checklist: Critical Questions and Strategies for Meeting the Education Needs of Children and Youth in Juvenile Family Court.***

- Implement the ***Endless Dreams Training and Video*** curriculum to reach teachers and administrators at local community schools.

- Provide workshops and seminars for social workers on supporting education issues and advocacy for youth in out-of-home care using ***Make a Difference in a Child's Life*** and ***Toolkit for Change***.

- Work with teacher education programs at local colleges and universities to set up courses that teach about the unique education needs of youth in care.

System Improvements

- Develop a university curriculum for teacher preparation programs about how to meet the education needs of youth in out-of-home care.

- Promote a national, standardized curriculum on the education issues of youth in out-of-home care that can be used by many people and easily accessed online.

4 Train Caregivers to Be Education Advocates at School and at Home

> There is no doubt about it: parent involvement in the education of their children positively influences child educational achievement. In the case of foster children, increased challenges mean increased need for caregivers to be invested and involved in their child's education.[23]

Background

Primary caregivers play a critical role in a youth's education through the support they provide both at home and in the youth's school. Close involvement from a caregiver leads to improved attendance, grades, and test scores; improved attitudes and school behavior; higher graduation rates; and higher rates of college enrollment.

Unfortunately, this important ingredient is frequently missing for youth in care for several reasons. First, youth typically experience frequent changes in caregivers, which creates a lack of continuity and consistency not only in their education, but also in the support they receive from their caregivers. Second, caregivers may not know about a youth's education capabilities and school history, and may instead focus almost exclusively on the youth's adjustment at home. Finally, many caregivers feel uncomfortable advocating for their youth in school, usually because they do not have the tools to do so.

Many caregivers recognize their limitations in this arena and have requested proper training in how to advocate for their youth's education:

- Parents need to be trained to advocate for our kids in the Latino community. I don't know of any services available. We need to inform parents about legal rights and services available, and we need culturally specific education for parents.

- We need to work with the birth family on educational issues. If my foster child goes back to her mother, she will not have the skills or knowledge to deal with the child. If the family is reunified, services may not carry over. The birth family needs to be educated and learn what I learned.[24]

Training for caregivers in helping youth be successful in school should focus on how they can do the following:

[23] Casey Family Programs (2000), p. 1.
[24] Burrell (21003), p. 12.

- Embrace education success as a high priority within the family and convey this priority to the youth in a caring, supportive manner. Studies show that parental *expectation* of a youth's education achievement is the single most important correlate of his or her education success. Likewise, caregivers should hold equally high expectations for teachers, judges, and child welfare workers regarding the education success of their youth.
- Understand the particular education challenges that youth in out-of-home care encounter and openly communicate with the youth about what's happening in the classroom.
- Learn how to talk directly to teachers about their expectations for the youth's progress, homework, tests, and classroom assignments.
- Support the youth's academics—for instance, by helping with homework, encouraging independent learning and self-advocacy, and becoming aware of community educational resources.
- Understand the school's procedures and requirements for enrollment, attendance, discipline, and graduation, and develop effective communication and cooperative, non-adversarial relationships between home and school.
- Become involved in the school. Involvement can range from maintaining regular communication with the school to volunteering and attending conferences and other functions.
- Understand and advocate for the youth's education rights, including where to find resources and what legal roles foster parents, birth parents, social workers, and surrogate parents play in schools.
- Prepare the youth to make the transition from high school to postsecondary education or employment, with continued support from appropriate adults in his or her life. For instance, a caregiver must know how to help the youth take responsibility for his or her own education needs—e.g., by developing a portfolio, directing an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), assessing postsecondary financial aid options, and accessing information about postsecondary institutions.

It is also crucial that the training be relevant to the caregiver's culture and be provided in the family's primary language whenever possible.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see section 2.

Strategic Tutoring Program Parent Curriculum (page 113). Based on Casey's Strategic Tutoring Program (see page 112), this training assists caregivers in

See also

Education Objective 3, for more information on how caregivers can work with multiple systems to ensure the best education outcomes for their youth

Education Objective 7, for more information on special education rights and responsibilities for caregivers who have youth with disabilities

Education Objective 10, for more information on how caregivers can support their youth in preparing to emancipate from their care

Close involvement from a caregiver leads to improved attendance, grades, and test scores; improved attitudes and school behavior; higher graduation rates; and higher rates of college enrollment.

handling homework-related issues, such as the importance of homework and the caregiver's role in supporting its completion, how to set up a good homework environment at home, and ways to provide homework correction and feedback.

Make a Difference in a Child's Life and ***Toolkit for Change*** (page 99). The first part of this resource is a training program that teaches parental and youth advocacy for a child's education rights, based on Washington state law. The *Toolkit for Change* provides general guidelines for education advocacy and a template for customizing the Washington training for other states.

Endless Dreams Training and Video (page 89). Although directed at educators, various modules of this training curriculum can be adapted for use with parent groups who deal with youth in care.

Marcus A. Foster Parenting University (page 100). As part of the Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute in California, this program strengthens the role of parents as their children's first teachers and as strong education advocates. This program model is a collaboration among community-based organizations, parents, health care providers, the Oakland Unified School District, and private individuals.

Early Child Development Screening Tools (page 86). The American Academy of Pediatrics has identified three brief (10 minutes or less), high-quality screening and reporting tools that parents can administer to children ages birth to 8 years. Foster parents could easily be trained to use these tools, which provide early detection of potential learning and developmental problems.

Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers (page 104). Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, these centers offer parents of children with disabilities an array of services that can support their child's successful education experience. The centers are helpful resources for the caregivers of youth in care who have cognitive or emotional disabilities.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this objective.

Other Recommended Resources

Handbook for Caregivers and Social Workers. Developed by Casey's San Diego office, this handbook provides a sound model that can guide caregivers in negotiating school systems and in developing education advocacy skills. It covers enrollment procedures, graduation requirements, the special education systems, and the roles of birth and foster parents in schools. It also contains sample letters for making referrals to special education and Section 504 services. Contact: Casey Family Programs—San Diego, 3878 Old Town Avenue, Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92110-3023, (619) 543-0774.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Offer parent training in education advocacy at least once a year, using tools such as the ***Endless Dreams Training and Video*** or the ***Strategic Tutoring Program Parent Curriculum***.

- Introduce parents to existing parent support groups in their community and encourage involvement.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Develop a *Handbook for Caregivers and Social Workers* for your region, using the San Diego handbook as a model (see "Other Recommended Resources" above).

- Work with family developers to include training on education issues in their parent training materials.

System Improvements

- Initiate collaboration with the Child Welfare League of America to strengthen and expand the education section of the PRIDE curriculum, a national foster-parent training program, with special attention to training for parents of diverse cultural backgrounds.

- Work with your state foster parent association to develop training materials on the education issues of youth in out-of-home care, and to train caregivers of younger children to use the recommended ***Early Child Development Screening Tools***.

- Educate your state foster parent association on using ***Make a Difference in a Child's Life*** and ***Toolkit for Change*** to adapt an education advocacy curriculum to your state's laws, and then train foster parents with it.

- Work with a local school district that is heavily populated with youth in out-of-home care to develop a parent training program similar to the ***Marcus A. Foster Parenting University***.

5 Provide Education Advocates and Education Specialists/Advocates

> The system must provide liaison services to help youth and parents through educational transitions. Advocacy resources to assist youth and families with enrollment, suspension/expulsion, and special education, or other barriers must be more readily available. Assistance that specifically helps youth to prepare for college or the workforce ... must be increased.[25]

Background

Youth, caregivers, and child welfare agencies identify the lack of education advocacy as a major failing of the child welfare system, and, when advocacy is available, as one of its most important assets. In fact, a lack of "adequate educational advocacy" was cited as a problem by the federal Child and Family Services Reviews for 14 of 37 states on whom reports have been issued to date.[26]

The voices of the youth themselves are perhaps the most eloquent in articulating this issue:

- I needed more support in school. I was by myself. No one came and asked how I was. I went off into the cracks. Teachers see kids hanging their heads; they need to really sit down and talk to kids.
- A mentor at my school helped me get money for college. I am the only one in my family to graduate. My mentor has really helped—calling every day, giving me pencils and papers and a daily planner. She taught me study skills. She had a good life and showed me the way.[27]

Consistent education advocacy is provided by people who are knowledgeable about a youth's needs and education history. These people can be either professional *education specialists/advocates* who perform an "official" dual role—direct service and advocacy—for the youth and family, or *education advocates*, individuals such as caregivers, mentors, and volunteers who are trained to speak out on behalf of a youth's education needs, primarily in schools and in court.

Solutions Using Education Specialists/Advocates

Some child welfare agencies hire education specialists/advocates to provide direct service and advocacy to youth and families, and/or to train caregivers, youth, and staff to be effective advocates in schools.

Education specialists/advocates provide education case management for individual youth, facilitate assessments and services for their academic needs, communicate with schools

[25] Burrell (2003, p. 19.
[25] Christian (December 2003), p. 4.
[27] Burrell (2003), pp. 10,11.

about their needs and progress, collaborate with schools on behavior and academic plans, and assist youth with postsecondary planning. They can also perform the crucial tasks of maintaining education records and ensuring that records are quickly transferred between schools.

As advocates, they protect a youth's education rights, speak out on his or her behalf at school meetings, and champion his or her best interests for curriculum opportunities, school placement options and stability, interagency transition plans, and the types of support to be provided. Education specialists/advocates may also be involved in public policy advocacy for all youth in out-of-home care, with the intent to improve systems.

There are many types of education specialists/advocates, and they provide services through different venues. These include private agency specialists who work at schools or agencies; specialists who are attached to public child welfare regional offices; and public child welfare specialists who work within designated schools. Some state Independent Living/Chafee programs have workers who serve as education specialists/advocates to assist high school or Independent Living/Chafee program youth with postsecondary planning and the like.

Education Advocates

When an agency cannot fund education specialists/advocates, they can train others to be education advocates who speak out for a youth's education needs in schools and in court. For instance, caregivers and parents can learn to assume an advocacy role, or social workers can be taught to provide advocacy support if necessary. Training court-appointed special advocates (CASAs), guardian ad litems (GALs), tutors, alumni, and mentors as volunteer advocates is also an option.

Finally, the youth themselves should be trained in self-advocacy. They must know how to articulate their academic needs and career goals, access the support they need, understand their education rights, and participate in education planning meetings.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see section 2.

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 88). These professionals provide education advocacy and consultation for youth in school, and they work with foster parents, youth, and social workers on school advocacy. They are very knowledgeable about school and community educational resources and often build strong working relationships with these organizations.

Make a Difference in a Child's Life and ***Toolkit for Change*** (page 99). The first part of this resource is a training program that enables caregivers to become education advocates and to train youth in self-advocacy, based on Washington state law. The *Toolkit for Change* provides general guidelines for education advocacy and a template for customizing the Washington training for other states.

See also

Education Objective 1, for more information on school placement stability and the important role that an education advocate can play as it relates to this issue

Education Objective 2, for more information on how education advocates can help ensure timely records transfer and review

Education Objective 6, for more information on important supplemental education supports and services

Education Objective 7, for more information on special education services and the role of the education advocate in obtaining them

Education Objective 8, for more information on the special advocacy needs of youth of color

Education Objective 9, for more information on how to ensure that youth obtain the academic skills they need prior to emancipating from care

Education Objective 10, for more information on how to help prepare youth for career and postsecondary education after high school

Youth themselves should be trained in self-advocacy. They must know how to articulate their academic needs and career goals, access the support they need, understand their education rights, and participate in education planning meetings.

Possible Selves (page 106). This successful motivation program teaches youth how to set goals, build plans for the future, and gain the skills to advocate on their own behalf. The program comes from the Center for Research on Learning at the University of Kansas.

Person Centered Planning (page 105). This program was developed as an approach to expand the power that youth have to identify their values and life choices, and to be supported as they develop problem-solving skills to achieve their personal goals.

Treehouse (page 116). This privately funded organization in the Seattle area offers a tutoring program, an education advocacy program, and a Coaching-to-College program for abused and neglected youth. In 2003, these highly acclaimed programs served 501 youth.

Foster Youth Services, San Diego (page 91). Under the auspices of the California Department of Education, this program provides education liaisons for youth in group homes in San Diego County.

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (page 96). Implementation of the advocacy aspect of this model varies by state. Massachusetts, for example, has 29 adolescent outreach workers whose jobs include school advocacy, while Washington's program focuses on training parents and social workers in school advocacy.

CASA Education Advocacy Programs (page 81). Selected state and local CASA programs are adding education advocacy for youth to the role of the CASA volunteer.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this objective.

Other Recommended Resources

Tennessee Department of Children's Services. This division of Tennessee's state government provides education specialists and attorneys to serve youth in out-of-home care across the state. These education advocates consult on specific case issues, attend Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and meet with teachers and administrators regarding the needs of individual youth. Contact: Mary Meador, Director of Education for the Department of Education, Tennessee Department of Children's Services, Cordell Hull Building, 7th Floor, Nashville, TN 37243-0290, (615) 741-9197, mary.meador@state.tn.us.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Continue to shape and refine the role of education specialists/advocates.
- Integrate education advocacy into a youth self-advocacy model at Casey and provide this training to youth. The youth advocacy sections from ***Make a Difference in a Child's Life*** and ***Toolkit for Change*** could be used for this.
- Act as a "broker" among the providers involved in the education of a youth in out-of-home care.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Train parents, social workers, and CASAs in education advocacy, using ***Make a Difference in a Child's Life*** and ***Toolkit for Change*** (adapted to your state's laws, as suggested below).

System Improvements

- Using ***Make a Difference in a Child's Life*** and ***Toolkit for Change***, work with your state foster parent association to create an education advocacy curriculum adapted to your state's laws, and then train foster parents with it.
- Collaborate with state CASA organizations on education advocacy projects that are based on CASA models, such as those listed in ***CASA Education Advocacy Programs***.
- Collaborate with alumni networks that can offer peer support to specific youth in local communities.
- Collaborate with state child welfare agencies to develop a model program and role description for regional education specialists, using information from existing public and private models (e.g., the *Tennessee Department of Children's Services* model—see "Other Recommended Resources" above).*

*Reminder to Casey employees: Remember that your work must not involve communicating a particular position on any legislation (whether enacted, pending, or proposed).

6 Give Youth Access to Supplemental Education Supports and Services

> It is now well-established that children in care do not achieve well within the educational system and perform below national norms for their age groups. . . . Our interpretation of these results is that something more than 'normal' family life and 'normal' parental interest may be required to compensate for earlier deprivation. . . . Our suggestion is that greater-than-average progress needs greater-than-average inputs.[28]

Background

Many youth in out-of-home care are at markedly increased risk of education failure, in addition to suffering the effects of foster care on their health, safety, and independent living. Their education has often taken a back seat to the crises in their lives, and many child welfare agencies may contribute to this imbalance by focusing solely on child protection over education.

To make up for this lack, youth in out-of-home care often need considerable supplemental education services if they are to catch up with peers who have more stable childhoods. For the K–12 population, these supplemental services might include mental health services, counseling and advisory support, tutoring, mentoring, career assessment and counseling, and access to remedial and enrichment offerings in the school curriculum.

Ideally, these supplemental services would start at the preschool level. For example, recent research has shown that phonological training that starts at about age 3 can, when combined with exposure to print, good language models, and training in letters and letter-sound associations, prevent reading difficulties and reduce the likelihood of special education placement.[29] Early academic assessment for preschoolers in out-of-home care, as well as access to preschool, Head Start, and early intervention programs, would be also be important supplemental services and supports.

While locating supplemental programs and services and then paying for them is often a challenge for younger and older youth, caregivers and service providers should remember to seek out valuable programs that already exist in the local schools and communities. These may include school-to-work programs, programs for teens who are also parents, Section 504 accommodations for youth who don't qualify for special education, honors and enrichment classes for youth who need greater academic challenges, school-based mentoring and tutoring, and early intervention programs designed to encourage college preparation for at-risk youth. Community after-school programs, mentoring, and tutoring programs are other valuable resources.

Youth may need adult support to find and take advantage of this plethora of assistance. In particular, adults should be the ones to evaluate a prospective program, as even tutoring and mentoring programs can vary greatly in their quality and outcomes.

[28] Heath, Colton, & Aldgate (1994), p. 245.
[29] Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1998).

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see section 2.

Strategic Tutoring Program (page 112). One of the most successful educational services offered by Casey, this program provides homework support while teaching students learning strategies that they can apply to a range of academic tasks.

Tutor Connection (page 118). This program from Casey's San Diego office partners Casey with education departments at local universities and with Community Service Learning programs. Their goal is to teach future educators about the education needs of youth in out-of-home care, and to provide them with experience in tutoring these youth.

GED Success (page 93). This instructional model assists older youth who are discouraged by school and severely credit-deficient. It helps them complete the General Educational Development (GED) tests.

Sound Partners (page 110). This phonics-based program provides one-on-one, custom instruction in early reading skills to children who are at risk of failing to acquire reading skills.

vMentor Program (page 119). The Orphan Foundation of America offers this national, online ("virtual") mentoring program for youth in care who are age 16 or older. Mentors work with their students on such issues as goal planning, strategies for success in school and the workplace, course selection, and career guidance.

Treehouse (page 116). This group's Coaching-to-College program matches volunteer coaches with youth to help them achieve their postsecondary goals. Youth work with their coach to identify education goals and carry out the steps necessary to reach them.

Person Centered Planning (page 105). This program helps youth in out-of-home care become self-advocates for the additional education services they need. It teaches youth how to articulate their strengths, their needs, and their goals and to develop a plan for reaching those goals.

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (page 96). This program gives funding to states so they can provide independent living services, including education services, to youth currently in care and to youth who have emancipated from care, up to age 21. These supplemental services might include tutoring, computer classes, and help with postsecondary planning.

TRIO Programs (page 117). These federal programs, which include Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Upward Bound Math/Science, offer motivation and education support to youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.

GEAR UP (page 92). This federal program offers disadvantaged youth in middle and high school the opportunity to improve their chances of entering postsecondary education.

See also

Education Objective 5, for more information on how education advocates can ensure that youth are given access to supplemental education supports and services

Education Objective 9, for more information on the relationship between supplemental supports and the achievement of basic skills and literacy

Education Objective 10, for more information on how supports in secondary education may be key for postsecondary and training options and opportunities

Handouts and Checklists

None for this objective.

Other Recommended Resources

Self-Determination Synthesis Project. Working with the Center on Self-Determination at Oregon Health Sciences University, this project customizes and validates a self-determination model and intervention tools for use with youth in foster care. These tools help teach youth how to advocate for their own supports and supplemental services. Contact: Self-Determination Synthesis Project, Department CSPC, College of Education, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001, (704) 687-3731, www.uncc.edu/colleges/education/cspc.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Help youth and families find tutors or tutoring programs that can support successful academic achievement. These could be locally sponsored programs or federal programs such as ***GEAR UP*** or one of the ***TRIO Programs***.

- Conduct ***Person Centered Planning*** training sessions with youth to identify their goals and needed areas of support.

- Contact local organizations (e.g., Kiwanis clubs, sports clubs) that provide scholarships and/or funding for extracurricular activities and high school activities that youth in care could use.

- Connect youth with community GED programs, college entrance exam preparation programs, and other supplemental supports.

- Work with teens who are also parents to be sure they're enrolled in programs that help them pursue their academic goals as well as obtain the parenting skills they need.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Provide self-determination training for youth to teach them how to advocate for their own supplemental supports and services.

- Inform families, caseworkers, and educators about an in-care youth's need for supplemental supports and participation in extracurricular activities. Teach them how to advocate for and access these resources.

- Teach educators, school counselors, and school social workers about the discrepancy in outcomes and available services that youth in out-of-home care often experience.

System Improvements

- Have foster care liaisons available in all schools and school districts to coordinate and monitor supplemental supports for youth in out-of-home care.

- Use the ***John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program*** to provide extracurricular, enrichment, tutoring, career development, and other services to youth in out-of-home care at early ages.

7 Address Special Education Needs as Appropriate to the Youth

> A review of the literature and anecdotal data from the field suggest that the stories of foster children in special education are, all too often, stories of unserved or under-served children, lost records, minimal interagency communication, and confusion over the roles of birth parents, foster parents, and social workers.[30]

Background

Youth in out-of-home care who also receive special education services are an especially vulnerable subgroup of all youth in out-of-home care. Between 30 and 40 percent of students in foster care may qualify for special education services because of a disability.[31] A recent comparison study by the Fostering Futures project reported the following common characteristics of high school youth who are in both out-of-home care and special education:

- They had lower grade point averages than youth in general education.
- They changed schools more frequently than youth in general education or in special education only.
- They earned fewer credits toward graduation than youth in general education.
- They had lower scores on state testing than youth in general education or in foster care only.
- They were more likely to be exempted from state testing than youth in general education or in foster care only.
- They were more likely to be in segregated special education classes than youth in special education only.[32]

Several specific aspects of special education services for youth in out-of-home care have been identified as problematic:

- **Inconsistent tracking of youth in foster care who are also in special education**. Very often, not all parties in the child welfare system are aware of a youth's special education needs. Social workers may not know to pass along special education information, or may not be completely aware of all the special education services and supports the youth has been receiving. Without one person to transfer a youth's records and information from school to school, a youth may experience lengthy delays in special education services, or may not receive them at all, because no one has brought the issue to the next agency's attention. One

[30] Van Wingerden, Emerson, & Ichikawa (2002), p. 3.
[31] Geenen & Powers (2003), p. 1.
[32] Geenen & Powers (2003), p. 1.

study found that while 36 percent of youth in care who were also in special education had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), only 16 percent of these youth were receiving the special education services outlined in the IEP.[33]

- **Lack of clarity about roles for youth in care who are also in special education**. Youth in out-of-home care often lack a consistent education advocate who is knowledgeable about their needs in the special education process. There is often confusion about who can sign consent forms and IEPs—is it the birth parents, foster parents, social workers, court appointed special advocates (CASAs), or surrogate parents? In particular, the federal and state definition of surrogate parent, and who may be a surrogate parent, needs clarification.

- **Lack of coordinated transition planning**. Special education systems and the child welfare system for adolescents do a poor job of working together seamlessly to prepare youth to move into adult living. Instead, both systems rarely meet, usually create independent transition plans, and often do not hear the youth's voice during the planning. This lack of coordination results in two (or more) non-integrated plans that the youth may or may not buy into as best for his or her future.

- **Insufficient attention to mental health and behavioral needs**. It is estimated that as many as two-thirds of youth in out-of-home care critically need mental health services, and close to a fourth have difficulties in social competence that are related to academic and behavioral challenges in school.[34] Furthermore, youth in out-of-home care who are in special education suffer disproportionately from emotional or behavioral disturbance as a primary handicapping condition.[35]

- **Disproportionate representation of youth of color in special education**. This is especially significant given the disproportionate representation of youth of color across the child welfare system itself.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see section 2.

Make a Difference in a Child's Life and ***Toolkit for Change*** (page 99). These education advocacy training tools directly address many special education issues, such as parental roles and rights, a youth's right to services, and timelines for provision of services. The curriculum also discusses disciplinary regulations related to suspension and expulsion.

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 88). These practitioners provide guidance on the special education process to social workers and families, as well as consultation and advocacy in the school and at IEP meetings.

[33] Geenen & Powers (2003), p. 3.
[34] Clark et al. (1994), p. 1.
[35] George, Van Voorhis, Grant, Casey, & Robinson (1992).

See also

Education Objective 2, for more information on transferring and retaining appropriate education records for youth in out-of-home care

Education Objective 3, for more information on involving child welfare and foster parents in a youth's education needs

Education Objective 4, for more information on general education advocacy

Education Objective 8, for more information on the disproportionate representation of youth in care in special education

Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers (page 104). Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, these centers serve families of children from birth to age 22 who have any sort of disability—physical, mental, learning, emotional, and/or attention deficit disorders. They train and inform parents and professionals of legal rights for youth in out-of-home care; help families obtain appropriate education and services for their children; and work to improve educational outcomes for all youth.

100 Black Men of America (page 75). Five chapters of this organization are designing and carrying out school-based projects to reduce referrals of youth of color to special education and to support feasible exits from special education and subsequent success in the academic mainstream.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this objective.

Other Recommended Resources

Education Issue Brief: Improving Special Education for Children With Disabilities in Foster Care. This informational resource and advocacy tool includes information on the role of foster parents and surrogate parents in the special education process for youth in out-of-home care. Available from Casey Family Programs, John Emerson, Senior Manager of Education (jemerson@casey.org), or Debbie Staub, Education Coordinator, (dstaub@casey.org).

Disability Support Services Coordinators. These are employees of a college who assist students with disabilities by ensuring equal access to services and accommodations. Based on appropriate disability documentation provided by the student, the coordinator ascertains eligibility for classroom accommodations and works with students and instructors to ensure that those accommodations are provided. Contact the college or university's Disabled Student Services office.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Attend IEP meetings with youth and advocate for appropriate special education services, goals and objectives, transition planning, and supports on their behalf.

- Teach youth how to advocate for themselves at IEP and other special education–related meetings.

- Connect youth in postsecondary settings with Disability Support Services Coordinators (see "Other Recommended Resources" above) who can provide them with a host of services.

- For high school youth with IEPs that include a transition plan, facilitate the coordination of the special education transition plan with the youth's Independent Living/Chafee program transition plan. Educate team members from both systems about the process for ensuring this coordination.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Train caregivers, social workers, CASA volunteers, and other involved adults in special education law using ***Make a Difference in a Child's Life*** and ***Toolkit for Change***.

- Provide training to special education teachers, related service personnel (e.g., speech and language pathologists and occupational therapists), school psychologists, special education support personnel, and all other auxiliary school staff (e.g., physical education teachers, music and art instructors, and librarians) on the unique behaviors associated with disabilities that are caused by pre- and/or post-natal abuse and neglect.

- Introduce caregivers to community support or advocacy support groups for parents with children with disabilities.

System Improvements

- Provide information to state and national organizations about the unique education needs of youth in out-of-home care.

- Work with state and national foster parent agencies to keep them informed of current policies about educating youth in care who have special needs.

8 Decrease Disparate Outcomes for Youth of Color

> As the childhood population becomes increasingly diverse, we have to pay ever more attention to the ways in which children from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds come to understand the roles that effort and ability play in academic achievement.[36]

Background

As in the child welfare system itself, racism, cultural bias, and deficient cross-cultural expertise toward youth of color (e.g., African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native) are realities in the education system. These disparities are directly affecting the education outcomes of youth of color. For example, in 2003 the Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute noted the following statistics:

- Only 51 percent of all black students and 52 percent of all Hispanic students graduate from high school, and only 20 percent of all black students and 16 percent of all Hispanic students are college-ready when they leave high school.
- Due to their lower college-readiness rates, black and Hispanic students are seriously under-represented in the pool of minimally qualified college applicants. Only 9 percent of all college-ready graduates are black and another 9 percent are Hispanic, compared to a total population of 18-year-olds that is 14 percent black and 17 percent Hispanic.
- The graduation rate for white students is 72 percent; for Asian students it is 79 percent; and for American Indian students it is 54 percent.[37]

The disparities in education supports, programs, and outcomes for youth of color are apparent in several key areas. Besides experiencing greater school segregation and its commensurate negative effect on their achievement, youth of color are more likely to undergo school disciplinary action, to attend schools that receive less funding, and to be put into low-education tracks.[38]

The most prevalent disparity is in "tracking"—the practice of placing students in different classes based on perceived differences in their abilities (called "ability grouping"). Education tracks take many forms, including remedial, special education, vocational, general, college preparatory, gifted, and talented. Students of color are consistently under-represented in tracks that promote a future in postsecondary education (e.g., college preparatory, gifted, and talented) and over-represented in tracks that are less inclined to prepare students for a four-year university setting (e.g., vocational and special education).[39]

[36] Bempechat (1998), p.114.
[37] Greene & Forster (2003), pp. 17, 21.
[38] Gordon (1998).
[39] Gordon (1998).

Other targets of discrimination

While not always youth of color, other populations of young people are also prone to discrimination and disparity in education outcomes. These include youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT), immigrant youth, and youth whose first language is not English. These populations have unique needs that must be addressed.

While the scope of this framework prevents us from discussing each of these populations individually, we highly encourage those working with these populations to learn more about their unique education needs, as well as ways that you can support culturally relevant and sensitive educational supports and services.

See the box below for more discussion of the education needs of American Indian and Alaska Native youth.

Eradicating disparities

Institutional racism is an unfortunate fact of life in both the education system and the child welfare system. The disproportionate representation and poor outcomes that in-care youth of color experience in the education system closely parallel the over-representation and poor outcomes of youth of color in the child welfare system.

The Unique Education Needs of American Indian and Alaska Native Youth

Casey has been actively addressing American Indian and Alaska Native youth welfare needs since the 1970s. One of our long-term goals is to support tribes to develop and improve sustainable child welfare systems.

There are many ideological, historical, legal, social, economic, and cultural influences on the education of Native youth. While Native youth in care are subject to the same disparities in education outcomes and discrimination as are other youth of color, their education issues, needs, and solutions also differ greatly from those of other youth in out-of-home care. For this reason, many of the education tools and objectives in this framework will not directly serve this very important part of our constituency.

Casey intends to work with the councils of many tribes to tailor an education framework that provides practices and resources supportive of the ways and lifestyles of Native youth. We want to reduce the disparity in education services for these tribes, while also supporting their efforts to develop and improve their own sustainable child welfare systems.

See also

Education Objective 3, for more information on how systems can work together to train each other in cultural sensitivity and thereby reduce racism

Education Objective 4, for more information on how caregivers can support their youth of color and ensure that they receive appropriate supports and services

Education Objective 5, for more information on the role of education advocates in supporting the education needs of all youth in care, including youth of color

However, this does not have to be the case. Like all youth in out-of-home care, youth of color deserve the absolute best attention, services, and supports we can give them.

The only way we can hope to reduce—and ultimately prevent—disparate outcomes for these youth is for education and child welfare systems to work together and address this issue head on. Agencies must explicitly focus on establishing cross-agency standards, training, and policies that can eradicate institutional racism.

We can begin by supporting culturally competent education staff, valuing the diverse strengths of youth and families, and providing services and promoting practices that honor each youth's cultural identity.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see section 2.

Endless Dreams Training and Video (page 89). This curriculum has several modules that directly address the issue of disparity, particularly as it relates to youth in out-of-home care.

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 88). By providing case management and advocacy, these practitioners ensure that youth of color receive unbiased assessments and equitable support services, and that they are not indiscriminately placed in education tracks that will reduce their life opportunities.

100 Black Men of America (page 75). Under its Wimberly Initiative on Disproportionality, this organization offers school-based mentoring and tutoring programs that support the academic and social skills of African American male youth.

K–12 School Placement Guide (page 98). This guide from Casey presents indicators to consider when determining the appropriateness of a school placement for an individual youth. A portion of these indicators address the youth's cultural-identity needs, as well as the cultural competence of the proposed school's personnel.

Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners (page 85). The Council for Exceptional Children is a national group that advocates for the rights and needs of youth in special education. This particular division is committed to markedly reducing the numbers of African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian and Alaska Native students in classes for the mentally retarded, the emotionally disturbed, and the learning disabled.

GEAR UP (page 92). This federal program offers support to disadvantaged youth in middle and high school (including youth of color) to improve their chances of entering postsecondary education.

TRIO Programs (page 117). This set of seven federal programs is designed to increase the number of low-income or disadvantaged students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this objective.

Other Recommended Resources

Gay & Lesbian Educators of British Columbia (www.galebc.org). This Web site offers a list of resources and publications for teachers on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) issues.

Developing Your Vision While Attending College. This series of four handbooks directed at Native youth takes students through the process of college selection, financial aid, and money management. The series of online guides promotes postsecondary education and training success by featuring stories of personal struggle and illustrating how educational and cultural success are intertwined. Available online at www.collegefund.org (American Indian College Fund).

Expanding the Circle, Respecting the Past, Preparing for the Future. This transition curriculum presents skills that help Native students stay in high school while giving them an opportunity to find out about themselves and what is important to them. The intent is to encourage them to graduate from high school and attend postsecondary schools or engage in a career that matches their individual strengths and interests. Purchase it from http://ici.umn.edu (Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, Publications Office).

National Indian Education Association (NIEA). This nonprofit organization was founded in 1969 to give American Indian and Alaska Native tribes a national voice in their struggle to improve access to educational opportunities. They play a pivotal advocacy role in improving federal tribal education policies. NIEA also holds an annual convention to share common concerns, ideas, and solutions to specific problems related to educating Native youth. Contact: National Indian Education Association, 700 North Fairfax Street, Suite 210, Alexandria, VA 22314, (703) 838-2870, niea@niea.org, www.niea.org.

Weiner, L., Leighton, M., & Funhouser, J. (2000). Helping Hispanic Students Reach Academic Standards: An Idea Book. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education. This resource available online, includes material of particular interest for individuals working with Hispanic/Latino youth, including "Using Family and Community Resources" (chapter 4), "Building Sturdy Foundations for Postsecondary Options" (chapter 5), "Overview of Profiled Programs" (appendix A), and "Resources for Serving Hispanic Students and Their Families" (appendix B). Available at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/Hispanic/title.html.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Use the ***K–12 School Placement Guide***–when deciding about the cultural appropriateness of placement for youth.
- Ensure that youth of color are not "tracked" based on their minority status, but are instead enrolled in courses that meet their individual needs and goals.
- Use self-determination and self-advocacy strategies to teach youth how to recognize discrimination and handle it effectively.
- Provide students with role models and mentors who have been successful in school.
- Ensure that youth of color are involved, if appropriate, in pre-referral programs, so they can receive support and education assistance prior to being labeled as "special needs."
- Identify local ***100 Black Men of America*** mentoring/tutoring programs and refer appropriate youth to these programs.
- Employ multiple assessment strategies to ensure that students' abilities and performance are gauged accurately and in non–culturally biased ways.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Train caregivers and social workers to be sensitive to institutional racism in schools, and provide tools for advocating equitable services and supports.
- Present to school districts attended by youth in care the ***Endless Dreams Training and Video*** modules that address disproportionality.

System Improvements

- Become a member of the ***Council for Exceptional Children***, ***Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners*** or a similar organization, and provide input and information to the group as they advocate for national policy changes to improve special education for youth of color.

- Promote the use of better education materials, books, and resources that offer perspectives other than that of the dominant "white" culture and that will support history and identity development and address disparities.

- Initiate a partnership with an existing local chapter of ***100 Black Men of America*** to assist them in addressing the education and economic issues of African American youth.

- Work with the national organization of ***100 Black Men of America*** to develop a local chapter with programs relevant to the needs of local youth.

9 Ensure That Youth Are Literate, Acquire Basic Skills, and Have Extracurricular Opportunities

> Children in foster care frequently do not receive the attention and continuity necessary for academic success. They are at a markedly increased risk for educational failure—especially dropping out—and associated independent living impacts after leaving foster care.[40]

Background

Numerous studies have found that, on average, youth who have been in out-of-home care have lower grades, lower standardized test scores in reading and math, higher dropout rates, and lower enrollment rates in higher education than peers who have not been in out-of-home care.

Information from the field and Casey's 2003 national alumni study reinforces the importance of both a high school diploma and strong academic skills for successful transition into adulthood.[41] Other studies show the specific value of higher-level math and science courses as a pathway to higher education for disadvantaged students, noting that having low expectations for these young people does them a disservice.[42] Clearly, ensuring that youth in out-of-home care leave school with strong literacy, math, science, and technology skills is critical.

Acquiring strong reading skills is especially important because of reading's link to success in both school and the workplace. Literacy research on elementary-age children offers some direction for curriculum, instruction, and remedial approaches in reading that we can translate into classroom practice and academic intervention for youth in care.[43] Additionally, this research can provide direction to caregivers and advocates who are looking for appropriate reading instruction and remediation for youth in care.

Early and accurate assessment of a youth's basic academic skills is essential to basic-skill acquisition. All too often, for example, reading problems are not detected until a youth has lost years of reading progress. Without accurate assessment, we cannot perform appropriate education planning and intervention.

School quality, and especially the quality of residential and institutional schools and alternative schools, plays an equally important role in the academic success of youth in care. Focus groups of youth and their caregivers in California's child welfare and juvenile justice systems revealed that "although a few students had positive experiences to relate, the vast majority of remarks about [the] educational quality [of institutional or

[40] National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Permanency Planning for Children Department (2002), p. 22.
[41] Pecora et al. (2003).
[42] Csikzentmihalyi & Schneider (2000).
[43] National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (April 2000).

alternative school programs] were extremely negative."[44] For instance, two focus group participants had this to say:

> At [continuation school] I was just given a packet. You didn't have to do the work; and if you were there to learn, you couldn't, because the others were goofing off.

> At lots of continuation schools the books are very old; the teachers are dried up and don't care what kids are doing. The idea is if you're a f-up you deserve a f-up school. They need to have books with African Americans in them; they need to be up to speed with what is happening in the world. Continuation schools should be better than other schools.[45]

Similarly, the quality of schools available to youth on American Indian reservations is of great concern, according to social work staff from reservations in the Midwest.

Another contributor to academic success is participation in school- or community-based co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Such activities improve a student's grade point average and other aspects of academic success and are perceived by youth as both important for their future and enjoyable in the here and now.[46] Extracurricular activities provide the added benefit of helping youth build interpersonal and social skills, meet other developmental needs, and generally enjoy a well-rounded life. Unfortunately for youth in care, chaotic personal lives and multiple changes in school placements may interfere with their opportunities to participate in these activities.

To best assist youth in out-of-home care, we must provide all these kinds of direct services to them and their families. We must work to improve systems in the schools in ways that will help youth acquire the basic skills, science and technology skills, and extracurricular activities they need to survive in the world.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see section 2.

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 88). These practitioners follow an education case-management model that, among other things, pays attention to a youth's progress in the acquisition of basic skills, plans around a youth's strengths and needs, and ensures that a youth participates in one or more extracurricular activities.

See also

Education Objective 4, for more information on how caregivers can be advocates for their youth to ensure that they acquire basic skills, progress academically, and become and stay involved in extracurricular activities

Education Objective 5, for more information on the role of education specialists/advocates as it relates to academic and extracurricular progress

[44] Burrell (2003), p. 7.
[45] Burrell (2003), pp. 8, 9.
[46] Csikzentmihalyi & Schneider (2000).

Strategic Tutoring Program (page 112). This individual tutoring curriculum has produced significant gains in grades and standardized achievement scores for youth in out-of-home care. It teaches young people the lifelong skills of independent problem-solving and of applying a thoughtful, "strategic" approach to tasks in school and in the workplace.

Strategic Tutoring Program Parent Curriculum (page 113). This supplement to the Strategic Tutoring Program teaches parents how to use similar strategies with their youth.

Treehouse (page 116). A Seattle-based private child welfare agency, this group has created a school-based tutoring model for youth in out-of-home care that has proven successful in improving reading and math skills.

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (page 96). Many services based on this program pay for tutoring to support the education of youth (usually 16 and older) who have an Independent Living/Chafee program plan.

Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment Education Supplement and Guidebook (page 77). Available in December 2004, the supplement and guidebook are designed to alert caregivers and social workers about gaps or delays in a youth's basic skills. They will provide a picture of a youth's general functioning in basic skills and technology and will offer specific education resources to improve them.

K–12 School Placement Guide (page 98). Developed by Casey, this guide describes a process for determining the most appropriate school placement for a youth based on his or her education strengths and needs. It also contains checklists for evaluating both public and private schools.

Online Learning Manual (page 103). Online learning is a growing education option for youth and has been used with success for youth who have difficulty learning in a traditional setting and for older youth who are behind in credits. This resource from Casey can be used in setting up online learning programs for youth in out-of-home care.

Endless Dreams Training and Video (page 89). This modular curriculum provides training for school staff in the education needs of youth in care and will help staff more effectively support the youth's efforts to strengthen academic skills.

100 Black Men of America (page 75). This group supports after-school homework and tutoring programs in selected sites across the country. Additionally, their 100 Black Men University offers youth more than 500 low-cost online courses in technology and small business skills.

Judicial Checklist: Critical Questions and Strategies for Meeting the Education Needs of Children and Youth in Juvenile and Family Court (page 97). Family court judges can use this list of basic questions (available in September 2004) to determine the education progress of youth whose care is under court supervision. The goal is to help judges ensure that youth are acquiring basic skills and achieving academically.

Handouts and Checklists

A sample of this item is available for photocopying in Section 3.

"Quality Assurance Standards and Program Recommendations for Tutoring and Mentoring." Practitioners working with youth in out-of-home care can identify the effectiveness of free and fee-based community tutoring programs using this comprehensive checklist.

Other Recommended Resources

Kidscreen. This assessment was developed by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services to identify needed services for youth entering out-of-home care. Youth are screened in five areas, including education, within 30 days of their initial placement. Results can alert caregivers and social workers to gaps or delays in a youth's basic skills. A Kidscreen brochure is available online at www.dshs.wa.gov (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services).

Instructional Access. Several states have contracted with this private enterprise to offer computer camp (a weekend of technology instruction) for high school youth in state Independent Living/Chafee programs. Upon successful completion of the course, the youth receives a computer from the company at no cost. Contact: Instructional Access, 6800 Indiana Avenue, Suite 260, Riverside, CA 92506, (888) 377-8982, www.instructionalaccess.com.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Provide education assessment and planning and facilitate interventions to improve basic skills for youth in out-of-home care.
- Engage caregivers and all the adults involved in a youth's life in discussions on how to get youth to read more, with greater comprehension, and with greater joy.
- Implement the ***Strategic Tutoring Program*** or basic skills tutoring.
- Use community tutoring programs as appropriate, but ensure that they meet the standards listed in the "Quality Assurance Standards and Program Recommendations for Tutoring and Mentoring" (see "Handouts and Checklists" above).
- Ensure the development of technology skills, either through school curricula or supplemental programs such as computer camps or the online university of ***100 Black Men of America***.
- Use the ***K–12 School Placement Guide*** in making school placement decisions.
- Monitor the school reading programs for youth in out-of-home care and encourage the use of research-based practices in schools. Provide adolescents who are behind in reading with age-appropriate instruction and supports.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Train school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers to support the education progress of youth in out-of-home care, using the ***Endless Dreams Training and Video***.
- Monitor the results of research on reading, especially concerning adolescent literacy, and disseminate this information to tutors, schools, caregivers, and social workers.
- Train Casey staff and caregivers in the use of the ***Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment Education Supplement and Guidebook*** (available in December 2004).

- Train caretakers to tutor youth using the ***Strategic Tutoring Program Parent Curriculum***.

- Train caretakers and agencies in ways to support getting youth involved in extracurricular activities. This might include setting up a fund to cover the costs of extracurricular activities or for extra transportation that might be required to enable the youth to participate in these activities.

System Improvements

- Make ***Strategic Tutoring Program*** training and programming available to community tutoring organizations, education specialists/advocates in other agencies, and programs under the ***John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program***.

- Collaborate with ***100 Black Men of America*** to provide after-school services to African American youth in schools that have high numbers of youth in out-of-home care.

- Provide training to social workers and Independent Living/Chafee program staff in public child welfare agencies in how to use the ***Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment Education Supplement and Guidebook*** (available in December 2004).

- Support improvements in public schools at local and state levels, especially reservation schools, alternative schools, and residential schools.

10 Prepare Youth to Achieve Their Postsecondary Education, Training, and Career Goals

> Improving the educational attainment of youth in care is important because education is related to obtaining and maintaining employment. With employment, former youth in care can meet other needs, such as housing and health care, and become productive and self-supporting citizens. [47]

Background

Completion of a postsecondary degree or certificate program is now an important ingredient in achieving most career goals and improving one's quality of life. Lifetime earnings, community participation, health, and living conditions are all enhanced by postsecondary education and/or training experiences.

Thanks largely to the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, youth who are leaving, or who have recently left, out-of-home care are increasingly being given the opportunity to receive valuable education and independent living services. However, as the Workforce Strategy Center notes, there is still a great need "for the development of a long-term and comprehensive college and career program and policy strategy for foster care youth."[48]

Preparing for postsecondary education experiences while in middle and high school, becoming aware of the full range of available postsecondary program options, learning to use needed support services, and applying self-determination skills for goal setting and problem solving are key to transition success.

High school completion and postsecondary planning

One of the most important strategies for youth in transition is to ensure that "way power" is matched to "willpower" when it comes to a youth's postsecondary goals. Recent studies have found that up to 80 percent of youth in foster care aspired to go to college, but few had actually taken the coursework needed to enroll.[49] Only 15 percent of youth in out-of-home care—versus 32 percent of the non–foster care population—are likely to be enrolled in college preparatory classes during high school.[50] Other studies have found that disadvantaged youth often lack the role models, peer support, and expectations from teachers and other adults that are the motivation for finishing high school and enrolling in postsecondary education and training.[51] As one young man said, "College is not something people talk to foster children about. They don't grow up with that cultural expectation."[52]

[47] Yu, Day, & Williams (2002a), p. 19.
[48] Workforce Strategy Center (March 2000), p. 2.
[49] Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service (1999), p. 10.
[50] Sheehy et al. (2001), p. 1 0.
[51] Horn & Chen (1998).
[52] Newberger (2001), p. 1.
[53] Horn & Carroll (1997), p. 6.

Students who are particularly needful of individual attention, advocacy, and targeted supports to prepare for and enroll in a postsecondary program typically have one or more of the following at-risk factors: low socioeconomic status, a history of frequent school changes, average or poor grades, single-parent families, one or more repeated grades, or an older sibling who has dropped out of school.[53] Actively supporting youth to progress through the critical steps to postsecondary education and training must involve foster parents, caseworkers, teachers, counselors, mentors, and advocates. These steps are (1) aspiring to continue training and education after high school, (2) preparing academically, (3) taking the exams required to enter postsecondary institutions, (4) learning about postsecondary education and training options, (5) applying to postsecondary programs and for financial aid, and 6) enrolling at an institution.[54]

As professionals we have many effective ways to add "way power" to "willpower" for all youth in care. We can:

- Train youth early in self-determination and self-advocacy, so they can speak up for themselves, direct and redirect their lives, solve problems, reach valued postsecondary education and training goals, and take part in their communities.
- Work with youth and their caregivers to convey not only the expectation of high school graduation but also the aspiration of postsecondary education or training.
- See that youth are prepared academically for success through appropriate academic supports, high school course planning, SAT/ACT and other assessment preparation, and guidance and follow-up in selecting and applying to postsecondary education and training programs.
- Provide youth with personal support to ensure that life issues do not become overwhelming and distract them from completing high school and accessing a postsecondary program.
- Assist foster parents in encouraging their youth to explore postsecondary education and training programs, and in helping the youth with financial aid and college applications.
- Support the participation of emancipated youth in helping younger youth in care prepare for and succeed in postsecondary life.

Career development

Whether they choose to go to work or to further their education and training after high school, youth need career development assistance. They need to learn about career options; assess opportunities and understand their personal interests, aptitudes, and working styles; gain job skills and experience; and learn job-seeking skills. High schools often provide much of this support, and youth may also turn to community programs.

[54] Horn & Carroll (1997), p. 6.

See also

Education Objective 5, for more information on the role of education specialists/ advocates in supporting preparation for career development and postsecondary education

Encourage youth to take postsecondary training at technical schools and/or two-year colleges in specific career fields. These programs often offer employment and economic rewards in much shorter timelines than college degree programs. These occupational training opportunities need to be presented to youth as a worthy higher education option, frequently leading to a good first job with decent wages.

For all youth in out-of-home care, work experience during the high school years—whether an after-school job or a summer job—is important to academic success and future employment. Casey's 2003 national alumni study found that youth in out-of-home care who had extensive employment experience while in high school were more than four times as likely to graduate as those who lacked this experience.[55] Work experience can also play an important role in helping to shape career and academic priorities.

Postsecondary support needs

For young people who go on to postsecondary education or training, the need for academic or personal and financial support does not end with high school graduation. In the focus groups conducted by the Youth Law Center in California, young people made this very clear:

> Books, tuition, money, money, money. The cost of books overwhelmed me, even at City College. What about state college? Graduate school?

> I do not know how to drive; I'm scared of driving. I'm worried about transportation and money for the bus—which I'll need to go to college.

> I went to talk to a college counselor who only wanted to talk about basketball. I didn't want to talk about basketball; I wanted to talk about classes. I had to talk to someone else.[56]

A 2003 study of 148 students in Casey's Continuing Education and Job Training (CEJT) post-discharge scholarship program examined the supports that youth were using to complete college. These included academic supports, emotional/social supports, financial supports, medical/dental supports, and supports for other aspects of living independently. The researchers found that youth relied on emotional/social and academic supports the most, and that they received these supports primarily from friends and family. They also found that academic supports were most used by freshman students.[57]

Obtaining vital postsecondary financial support continues to be a challenge as well. State and federal financial aid and scholarship options for youth who have been in out-of-home care have increased in recent years, but there is still a large unmet need.

[55] Pecora et al. (2003), p. 43.
[56] Burrell (2003), pp. 13, 16.
[57] Sim, O'Brien, & Pecora (2003), p. 1.

Fortunately, state-level tuition waivers and education and training vouchers provide an important first step in meeting this need, as does the Orphan Foundation of America's scholarship program.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see section 2.

Academic and career development support

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 88). When serving youth age 14 to 18 who have not yet graduated from high school, these practitioners provide transition services for goal setting, direct self-determination training and skills development for postsecondary education and/or career development.

Person Centered Planning (page 105). This systematic approach to setting and achieving goals can be useful in guiding youth who are making plans about their lives after high school.

GED Success (page 93). This is a preparation program for the General Educational Development (GED) tests that provides a comprehensive approach to understanding, preparing for, and passing exam components. Originally designed for youth with disabilities, GED Success is also effective for youth without disabilities.

Get SET Program (page 94). Developed in Casey's Yakima office, this four-week summer transitional skill development program provides participating youth with instruction in study and work skills.

Project Paycheck (page 107). Developed in Laramie County, Wyoming, this collaborative job-training program matches adult mentors from the business world with youth participants. Mentors provide ongoing encouragement and support for youth engaged in the program.

San Antonio Community Transition Services Center (page 108). CTSC is the "headquarters" for a community collaborative of service providers covering the spectrum of needs of young adults emancipating from care. Services include academic and work skills instruction.

Technology and Work Experience Centers (page 115). Casey's Tacoma division developed this successful model of online learning for youth in out-of-home care who wish to complete their high school education, giving them better odds for future employment and postsecondary options.

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (page 96). This state-administered federal program is designed to serve youth as young as age 14 by providing education advocacy, tutoring, computer camps or classes, help with GED completion, and college and career planning activities.

vMentor Program (page 119). The Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) set up this online system to match youth with adult mentors who provide Web-based support for their continuing education. It is available to youth who are on an OFA scholarship, in the Casey Family Scholars Program of the OFA (described below), or in an Independent Living/Chafee program in states that have contracted with OFA.

Treehouse (page 116). This private agency serves youth in out-of-home care in the Seattle area. Their popular Coaching-to-College program provides volunteers who guide high school youth through the college preparation, selection, application, and enrollment process.

Benchmark Permanency Hearing Program (page 78). This program in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, has youth participants and other important team members meet in a judge's chambers. The hearings involve the youth in assessing his or her strengths and needs, developing a plan for transition to adulthood and independence, and lining up future community and individual support.

TRIO Programs (page 117). These seven federal and state programs provide training in many topics to help youth in care achieve education success. The programs include assistance in re-entering high school, entering GED programs, and completing college admissions and financial aid applications; personal and career counseling and instruction; and academic tutorials.

College Bridge Programs (page 83). These programs let youth participate in dual-enrollment programs (simultaneous enrollment in high school and college). Youth can take on more rigorous coursework, earn college credit while in high school at little or no personal financial cost, and make a somewhat seamless transition to postsecondary education. Although originally designed for high school youth needing a more rigorous program, these programs now also target disadvantaged youth at risk of not enrolling in postsecondary education.

Campus Peer Mentoring Project (page 80). The Community College Foundation in California offers this program at two community colleges in the Los Angeles area to provide academic and personal support to youth formerly in foster care .

Financial support

Continuing Education and Job Training (page 84). This Casey program provides tuition support, other financial support, and case management services to youth in postsecondary education and training programs. Participating youth maintain a relationship with either a social worker or a transition specialist and receive counseling and mentoring support.

Casey Family Scholars Program of the Orphan Foundation of America (page 82). This program provides scholarships for postsecondary education and training to young people who have been in care. Participating scholars receive ongoing support through multiple means, including a toll-free support number and regular e-mail contact with an assigned mentor.

Education and Training Vouchers (page 87). These federal Independent Living/ Chafee program funds for young people who have been in care can provide up to $5,000 a year toward the cost of attending a postsecondary institution. Eligible expenses include tuition and room and board.

State Tuition Waivers (page 111). Currently available in 17 states, these waivers exempt youth formerly in care from tuition fees. Each state has its own criteria for the waivers.

Technical Assistance for Needy Families (page 114). This federal program provides financial assistance as well as educational and training opportunities that can improve wages and working conditions for low-income families. Many youth who emancipate from care at age 18, and who are pregnant or have children, may qualify for this assistance. Kinship care families may also qualify.

Workforce Investment Act (page 121). Services provided under this federally funded program prepare qualifying low-income youth (including youth in foster care) for postsecondary education and/or employment. Services can include paid and unpaid work experiences, summer jobs, occupational skills training, and tutoring.

Guardian Scholars Program (page 95). Available at California State University, Fullerton, and California Polytechnic University, Pomona, this public-private partnership program supports the efforts of youth formerly in foster care to complete a college education. It offers outreach, tuition assistance, room and board, textbooks and supplies, counseling, advising, and a variety of support services.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this objective.

Other Recommended Resources

Post-ITT Web site (www.postitt.org). This site of the Postsecondary–Innovative Transition Technologies Project is designed to help students with disabilities prepare for college and navigate the postsecondary education system. It provides a number of resources, including relevant laws, disability service information, and activities that are useful to students, parents, educators, and Disability Support Services Coordinators (see Education Objective 7, “Other Recommended Resources”).

Frequently Asked Questions About the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and Frequently Asked Questions II. Information about the Independent Living/Chafee program is available in these two Casey documents, which are useful for professionals and youth who want to learn more about this act. Available from Casey Family Programs, John Emerson, Senior Manager of Education (jemerson@casey.org), or Debbie Staub, Education Coordinator, (dstaub@casey.org).

Providing Education Related Supports and Services Under the Chafee Independence Act of 1999: Selected State Activities and Postsecondary Education and Training Voucher Information. This Casey document provides information on the use of Chafee program funds for postsecondary education in selected states and on education and training vouchers. Available from Casey Family Programs, John Emerson, Senior Manager of Education (jemerson@casey.org) or Debbie Staub, Education Coordinator (dstaub@casey.org).

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Provide self-determination/advocacy training for youth, with emphasis on goal setting and postsecondary education and training planning.
- Develop solid collaborative interagency transition plans for youth, emphasizing "way power" alongside "willpower" and providing education supports for high school completion, career development, and postsecondary access.
- Link youth to existing community educational and career development programs, such as ***TRIO Programs*** and ***College Bridge Programs***.
- Make sure that each youth's high school counselors and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) special education managers know about his or her transition plans and support needs.
- Provide career and vocational assessments and make sure youth know about the career, vocational, and technical classes offered in their high schools and communities.

- Talk with youth about the complete range of postsecondary education and training options available to them. Arrange campus or program visits where they can meet successful students and be introduced to support services.

- Ensure that youth have access to successful alumni and adult role models who have benefited from postsecondary education or training.

- Ensure that youth have adequate summer and part-time work experience during their high school years.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Develop a resource bank of local youth employment options, community educational options, and other community services for youth.

- Develop links with the state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinator and explore avenues for partnering on ***GED Success***, online learning, college preparation, career development, and other transition programming.

- Link students to (or develop) a Coaching-to-College program for all community youth based on the ***Treehouse*** model.

- Support the full use of ***Education and Training Vouchers*** available in your state.

System Improvements

- At local and state levels, provide information to high schools and educators on the academic and career preparation needs of youth in transition and on the ***John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program***.

- Collaborate with your state's child welfare agency and the office of Public Policy on developing state program improvement plans and State Independent Living Plans for the ***John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program***.

- Develop links with your state's Board of Higher Education and state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinator to explore options for supporting youth formerly in out-of-home care who are in state colleges and other state postsecondary training programs. Refer to the Casey document *Providing Education Related Supports and Services Under The Chafee Independence Act of 1999: Selected State Activities and*

Postsecondary Education and Training Voucher Information (see "Other Recommended Resources" above) for examples of higher education–Chafee linkages developed in some states.

- At local and state levels, collaborate with ***Workforce Investment Act*** and ***Technical Assistance for Needy Families*** programs to maximize opportunities for youth in care and emancipated youth to take advantage of these programs.

- Promote or facilitate local and state postsecondary education and training alliances that target the issues of youth in foster care. Include state and private agencies, alumni, higher education, and corporate partners.

11 Promote Public Policies That Support Education During and After Care

Background

Underlying all of the issues in this framework is the need to support public policies and programs that will improve the education outcomes of youth in out-of-home care. Without coherent, comprehensive public policies and the engagement of major stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels, change and systems improvement will be only piecemeal.

Because of its status as a foundation, Casey is prohibited from engaging in any form of legislative lobbying at the federal, state, and local levels. However, Casey and other nonprofit organizations still have an important role in developing and implementing education policy for youth in out-of-home care.

This role, first of all, involves developing awareness of significant issues that affect youth in out-of-home care, and then educating and convening potential partners and major stakeholders who can develop policy and support policy initiatives. Secondly, it involves collaborating with partners in policy development and providing technical assistance when policies are implemented.

Working solutions

Specific policy implementation activities that Casey can engage in include:

- Researching and collecting data and information on the education and transition issues of youth in out-of-home care
- Developing and disseminating well-balanced information briefs related to specific issues in the education of youth in out-of-home care, such as service needs, costs, outcomes, promising practices, and policy gaps
- Producing articles for professional child welfare and education journals, newsletters, and Web sites on the education issues of youth in out-of-home care
- Maintaining a presence at targeted national education, child welfare, and legal conferences, and making presentations on the education issues of youth in out-of-home care

> “For years, we have focused only on protection of foster children. Protection must be priority number one, but we must do more. We must ensure access to education and provide equality of that education. We ask more of almost every other group in America. Today, we must begin to ask more of ourselves and our foster children when it comes to their education.[58]”

[58] A. Cornell, in keynote address quoted in Yu, Day, & Williams (2002b), p. 24.

See also

Education Objective 3, for information on how systems can work together to influence change at the local, state, and national levels

- Convening stakeholders from the three key systems (child welfare, education, and legal) within a state or community to develop a joint vision, agenda, and action plan for reform. The meeting could be modeled on the Educational Symposium of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges held in 2001 (see "Other Recommended Resources").
- Convening stakeholders to focus on specific education issues, as Casey did at the Higher Education Summit in November 2003 with support from the Gates Foundation
- Supporting the implementation and expansion of policy initiatives, such as the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program or education and training vouchers (both described in "Promising Practices and Resources"), through technical assistance and the development of implementation tools

Potential partners and major stakeholders that are or should be included in policy efforts include:

- Public and private child welfare agencies and advocacy organizations
- Youth leadership groups and foster care alumni groups
- Foster parent organizations
- Special education groups, including government agencies and professional organizations
- Regular education (K–12) groups, including government agencies and professional organizations
- Judicial organizations
- Birth families and relatives
- Legal organizations
- Court-appointed special advocates (CASAs) and guardian ad litems (GALs)
- Higher education groups, including government agencies and professional organizations
- Workforce development groups, including government agencies and groups from the private sector

Casey and other child welfare agencies can provide leadership to these stakeholder groups for all the issues identified in this framework. By bringing the education needs

of youth in out-of-home care and emancipated youth to the forefront of public policy, agencies can make education excellence for all youth in out-of-home care a core value of child welfare and education policy.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see section 2.

Endless Dreams Training and Video (page 89). This video is a popular and successful tool for educating policy makers about the education needs of youth in out-of-home care.

Make a Difference in a Child's Life and ***Toolkit for Change*** (page 99). The Toolkit for Change portion of these materials gives education advocates self-contained resources for customizing a campaign to help youth in care get the most out of school.

Seattle Foster Care and Education Consortium (page 109). This group provides a model for how to support a state effort to promote school stability for youth in out-of-home care.

Judicial Checklist: Critical Questions and Strategies for Meeting the Education Needs of Children and Youth in Juvenile and Family Court (page 97). This checklist (available in September 2004) will provide judges with a guide for monitoring the education progress of youth under the court's supervision.

Workforce Investment Act (page 121). This federal program serves low-income youth who face specific barriers to employment or high school completion and prepares them for postsecondary education and/or employment. One of the barriers listed is having spent time in foster care.

Technical Assistance for Needy Families (page 114). This federal program provides funds to states for assistance to low-income families. One of its main purposes is to fund education and training opportunities for participants.

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (page 96). This federal program provides money to states to prepare youth emancipating from foster care for independent living; it also provides for some support for youth who have already made the transition from care. States have the flexibility of using a portion of the funds for education services.

Education and Training Vouchers (page 87). This federal program, administered under the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (described above), provides up to $5,000 for postsecondary education and training to youth who have been in foster care.

Handouts and Checklists

Samples of these items are available for photocopying in Section 3.

"Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care: A Selected Bibliography." This list of articles on the education of youth in foster care is a good resource for child welfare and education professionals looking for more information on this topic.

"Indicators of Systems Change for Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Out-of-Home Care." This Casey-developed matrix can be used at the local level to guide school districts in developing a policy for improving the education outcomes of youth in out-of-home care in their districts.

Other Recommended Resources

Assessing the Effects of Foster Care: Early Results from the Casey National Alumni Study. This survey of more than 1,000 youth who have emancipated from out-of-home care yields valuable information about the role of education in life outcomes for youth in care. It is the result of a Casey collaboration with researchers from Harvard University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Washington. Available online at www.casey.org (Casey Family Programs).

Educational Attainment of Foster Youth: Achievement and Graduation Outcomes for Children in State Care. This 2001 study from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy looked at the education outcomes of more than 4,500 in-care youth in public schools in Washington state, quantifying the achievement gap between youth in foster care and other students in Washington state. Available online at www.wsipp.wa.gov (Washington State Institute for Public Policy).

Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Care (Monograph). From the Child Welfare League of America, this is a comprehensive overview of the education needs of youth in out-of-home care. Order online at www.cwla.org (Child Welfare League of America).

Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care: Perspectives from Judges and Program Specialists, Technical Assistance Bulletin No. 6. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges issued this Technical Assistance Bulletin to present information obtained from judges and other child welfare professionals about current efforts to improve the education outcomes of youth in care. It also points to areas of practice needing improvement. Available online at www.pppncjfcj.org (National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Permanency Planning for Children Department).

Educational Symposium of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). An effective example of convening major stakeholders around

particular education issues, this project was meant to increase the capacity of judges, child welfare staff, and educators to assist young people in meeting their education and transition goals. The project surveyed family court judges and child welfare agencies, held a national symposium, and published two monographs on the education outcomes of youth in out-of-home care. Information on the project is available in NCJFCJ Technical Assistance Bulletin No. 6, described in the above entry.

Providing Education Related Supports and Services Under the Chafee Independence Act of 1999: Selected State Activities and Postsecondary Education and Training Voucher Information. Information on the use of Independent Living/Chafee funds for postsecondary education in selected states and on education and training vouchers has been brought together in this Casey document. Available from Casey Family Programs, John Emerson, Senior Manager of Education (jemerson@casey.org), or Debbie Staub, Education Coordinator (dstaub@casey.org).

Lost in the Shuffle Revisited: The Education Law Center's Report on the Education of Children in Foster Care in Pennsylvania. This 2002 report focuses on a range of issues related to the education of youth in care and provides recommendations for policy changes and systems improvement in both the child welfare and education arenas. Available online at www.elc-pa.org (Education Law Center—Pennsylvania).

Getting Out of the Red Zone: Youth From the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems Speak Out About the Obstacles to Completing Their Education, and What Could Help. This report from the Youth Law Center documents the results of focus groups that examined the education experiences of youth in out-of-home care in California. It provides good insight into the perspectives of youth and caregivers. Available online at www.youthlawcenter.com (Youth Law Center).

Leave No Youth Behind: Opportunities for Congress to Reach Disconnected Youth. This 2003 policy analysis, issued by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), includes youth in foster care as one group of disconnected youth. The document emphasizes the need for a "coherent youth policy, at the national level, to help at-risk youth become connected, productive members of society." The authors go on to focus on six federal programs that have the potential to help at-risk youth. Available online at www.clasp.org (Center for Law and Social Policy).

Opportunities for Expanding College Bridge Programs for Out of School Youth and Promising Practices: School to Career and Post-secondary Education for Foster Care Youth, A Guide for Policymakers and Practitioners. Both of these informational documents from the Workforce Strategy Center recommend specific education programs that can help disadvantaged youth, including youth in foster care, complete high school and continue in postsecondary education and training. Available online at www.workforcestrategy.org (Workforce Strategy Center).

Better Together. This curriculum teaches youth formerly in care and child welfare staff to unite on projects that involve alumni in some area of child welfare policy or practice. Typical projects include mentoring, advocacy, product and document reviews, speaking engagements, conferences, and training. Through interactive learning activities, project team members explore the benefits of partnering, the unique contributions each perspective brings, the culture of foster care, ways to partner effectively, and how to share from personal experience strategically. For more information, contact Casey Family Programs, Cynthia Scheiderer, Alumni Relations, (206) 282-7300, cscheiderer@casey.org.

Education Issue Brief: Improving Special Education for Children With Disabilities in Foster Care. This report is an ideal tool for educating the general public and particular stakeholders about the unique education needs of youth who are both in care and in special education. Prospective audiences include professional special education organizations, legal and special education advocacy groups, child welfare agencies, and foster parent organizations. Available from Casey Family Programs, John Emerson, Senior Manager of Education (jemerson@casey.org), or Debbie Staub, Education Coordinator (dstaub@casey.org).

Frequ*ently Asked Questions About the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and Frequently Asked Questions II*. These documents outline the main provisions of the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and clarify its specific benefits for youth in care and youth who have emancipated from care. Available from Casey Family Programs, John Emerson, Senior Manager of Education (jemerson@casey.org), or Debbie Staub, Education Coordinator (dstaub@casey.org).

Higher Education Reform: Incorporating the Needs of Foster Youth. This document identifies three Higher Education Act reauthorization strategies that would promote improved postsecondary access and outcomes for students coming from out-of-home care. It is an excellent resource for individuals working to eliminate the obstacles to postsecondary education and training for youth emancipating from out-of-home care. Available at www.casey.org (Casey Family Programs).

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Educate school staff on the particular education needs and issues of youth in out-of-home care.
- Present one or more modules of the ***Endless Dreams Training and Video*** to all school staff, school boards, and parent-teacher organizations.
- Present one or more modules of the ***Endless Dreams Training and Video*** to pre-service teachers in teacher training programs at local colleges.
- For high school youth with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that include a transition plan, facilitate the coordination of the special education transition plan with the youth's Independent Living/Chafee program transition plan. Educate team members from both systems about the process for ensuring this coordination.
- Provide self-determination training to youth and ensure that youth have a voice in policy efforts that are of concern and interest to them.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Research information on how ***John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program*** funds are used in your state for education purposes and how youth can access them. Make this information available to youth, caregivers, schools, and public and private agencies serving youth in out-of-home care and emancipated youth.
- Obtain up-to-date information on the use of ***Education and Training Vouchers*** in your state, and disseminate this information to youth, caregivers, schools, and public and private agencies serving youth in out-of-home care and emancipated youth.
- Develop an informational brochure for schools on the education needs of youth in out-of-home care and/or youth in transition.
- Research and disseminate information on public funding streams that can be used for education purposes for youth in out-of-home care—e.g., ***Workforce Investment Act*** funds or ***Technical Assistance for Needy Families*** funds.

- Stay informed on state and federal policy developments that are relevant to youth in out-of-home care. Make sure that youth, caregivers, and agency staff are aware of any new developments that could benefit the youth.

System Improvements

- Form a local coalition of representatives from child welfare and education agencies to collaborate on local and state issues of youth in out-of-home care.

- Facilitate an education summit, for either K–12 or higher education youth, that brings together local or state stakeholders around the theme of improved education and transition outcomes for youth in out-of-home care.

- In a school district heavily populated by youth in out-of-home care, work with district administrators to create and implement a system-wide plan that improves the education outcomes of these youth. Use Casey's "Indicators of Systems Change for Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Out-of-Home Care" (see "Handouts and Checklists" above) to guide and evaluate the plan.

- Make presentations at state and national conferences of professional K–12 and higher education, child welfare, and legal advocacy groups, such as the Council for Exceptional Children, the National Resource Center for Youth Development, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, and the American Bar Association, on the education needs of youth in care.

- Write an article on one or more aspects of the education issues of youth in care for a professional journal or for Web publication.

Looking Forward

No matter what education services or advocacy we provide, youth must remain at the heart of our work. It is their needs, dreams, and aspirations that must continue to drive our efforts to support and facilitate positive education outcomes for youth in care.

While the greatest strides are made youth by youth, more comprehensive efforts on their behalf are still needed in all systems related to education. These efforts are briefly described below.

Greater collaboration and coordination

Public and private agencies at the local and state level, including education systems, must continue to explore ways to collaborate to ensure successful education outcomes for all youth in care.

University-based professional development

Educators, social workers, and lawyers at the pre-service level can all benefit from training on the education issues of youth in care. While how to teach youth with special needs and diverse abilities is often a topic of study for education students, many potential teachers are never exposed to curricula or instruction specifically on teaching youth in care. Nor are many high school counselors aware of the targeted postsecondary financial aid that is available for students in care. Social workers, education specialists/advocates, and others can develop relationships with professors and administrations in law schools, and education and social work departments to promote curricula that focus on all aspects of education for youth in care.

Standardized education training for foster parents

A standardized, comprehensive foster parent training curriculum focused on educating youth in care would be a valuable tool for state and federal child welfare agencies and foster parent associations across the country. Such a curriculum could be set up as standalone training or as part of an existing foster parent training curriculum such as PRIDE, one of the most common national foster parent training curricula. Any curriculum that is developed should be easily accessible online and should include information and approaches that are culturally relevant to a diverse population of caregivers, including American Indian and Alaska Native, African American, and Hispanic families. This kind of curriculum would ensure that school placement stability, education advocacy,

appropriate school supports, and other issues remain at the forefront of the work we all do to promote the lifelong success of youth in out-of-home care.

Direct self-advocacy training for youth in care

Continual recognition of the youth's voice and choices is at the core of our work: every service provided to the youth must take the youth's input into account. But merely stating that youth need to be self-advocates is not enough. Youth in care need direct instruction in how to advocate for their needs, make and adjust education and career goals, and develop a personal support network. This instruction must be developmentally age-appropriate as well as culturally appropriate. The skills that are taught must be tailored to what the youth needs to ensure that his or her voice is heard and responded to effectively.

Ongoing research and data collection

We must continue to collect outcome and comparative data on the education performance of youth in out-of-home care, including information on barriers faced by emancipated youth in postsecondary education. Data should also be collected on the efficacy of specific programs meant to support the education needs of youth in care.

Increased public policy focus

Most national and state education legislation and policies do not recognize youth in out-of-home care as having unique education needs. While the needs of migrant or homeless youth are considered under the No Child Left Behind Act, this is not the case for youth in care, or for disadvantaged or disconnected youth in general. These are some specific policy areas that must be addressed for youth in care:

- The necessity of school placement stability and of efficient maintenance and transfer of school records for these youth
- The role of judicial oversight in promoting the education of youth in care
- The need to ensure that the voices of youth in care and of youth formerly in care are represented in all policy development efforts
- Strategies for reducing the disproportionate number of youth in care on tribal reservations

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Eleven Education Objectives

School transfer issues

1. Provide school placement stability.
2. Secure and maintain accurate and accessible school records.

Collaboration and training issues

3. Facilitate collaboration and training among all involved systems.
4. Train caregivers to be education advocates at school and at home.

Supports and services issues

5. Provide education advocates and education specialists/advocates.
6. Give youth access to supplemental education supports and services.
7. Address special education needs as appropriate to the youth.
8. Decrease disparate outcomes for youth of color.

Preparation issues

9. Ensure that youth are literate, acquire basic skills, and have extracurricular opportunities.
10. Prepare youth to achieve their postsecondary education, training, and career goals.

Public and policy issues

11. Promote public policies that support education during and after care.

The framework provides a combination of background information plus almost fifty practical applications that Casey field staff, or anyone involved with serving youth in care, can use in developing a holistic, comprehensive, and culturally responsive approach to education.

Promising Practices and Resources

Section 2

Contents

Many of the promising practices and resources in this framework encompass Casey's education expertise in case management. This section describes them and gives examples of how we use them.

The resources include Casey education specialists, tutoring and technology tools, post-secondary education options, cultural diversity experience, public/private cooperation modes, and public policy advocacy efforts.

Other promising practices we describe here come from across the country and are known to Casey as valid, effective models for meeting the education objectives in this framework.

100 Black Men of America

Education Objective(s): 7, 8, and 9

Mission/Purpose: To enhance educational and economic opportunities for all African Americans. The current focus is on youth mentoring, violence prevention, and education and economic development programs.

Target Population: Partners and professionals who work with African American youth, especially African American males.

Description: *100 Black Men of America* has many programs. One of its most well known is the Wimberly Initiative on Disproportionality, created in partnership with the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. This initiative is an effort to reduce the disproportionate representation of African Americans in special education. It has set up model programs using mentors and tutors to improve the academic and social skills of these youth. Another program, 100 Black Men University, offers over 500 low-cost, online courses in computer technology and small business development to participating youth. The organization also has a national magazine and conducts regional training conferences and national conferences.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Identify local *100 Black Men of America* mentoring and tutoring programs and refer appropriate youth to them.
- Give youth, families, social workers, and schools information on 100 Black Men University and encourage youth to enroll if the program would help them meet their education and career goals.
- Partner with an existing local chapter of *100 Black Men of America* to help them address the education and economic issues of African American youth in out-of-home care.
- Work with the national organization of *100 Black Men of America* to develop a local chapter with programs relevant to the needs of local youth.

Contact(s)

100 Black Men of America,
141 Auburn Avenue,
Atlanta, GA 30303,
(404) 688-5100,
(800) 598-3411,
www.100blackmen.org

Contact(s)

For reprints of articles: Lisa Waxler, American Bar Association Service Center, 541 North Fairbanks Court, Chicago, IL 60611, (800) 285-2221, waxlerl@staff.abanet.org, or *Child Law Practice*, childlawpractice@staff-.abanet.org

For additional information: Kathleen McNaught (the series' author), American Bar Association, McNaughK@staff.abanet.org

American Bar Association *Child Law Practice* Series

Education Objective(s): 2 and 3

Mission/Purpose: To promote increased insight into the education needs of youth in out-of-home care and into the role that lawyers, child welfare professionals, and caregivers can play in education advocacy for these youth.

Target Population: Lawyers, child welfare professionals, and caregivers who are interested in the education needs of youth in out-of-home care from preschool to grade 12

Description: Starting in 2002, the American Bar Association began publishing a series of articles in *Child Law Practice* to raise awareness of the kinds of education services that youth in out-of-home care need. The articles, which are being written through the fall of 2004 and will be published in book form in late 2004, cover the following topics: "Education Advocacy in Child Welfare Cases: Key Issues and Roles" (November 2002); "Education Law Primer" (in two parts, March 2003 and April 2003); "Innovative Approaches for Meeting Educational Needs" (April 2004); "The IEP Process" (coming soon); "Advocacy for Young Children 0–5" (coming soon); and "Discipline" (coming soon). In addition, this concise, readable series will provide up-to-date information on IDEA (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) once it is reauthorized. The series also includes information relevant to other education issues surrounding youth in care, such as confidentiality and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (see page 101).

How You Can Use This Resource

- Obtain copies of the series, become familiar with its contents, and refer to it when advocating for the education rights of youth in out-of-home care.
- Disseminate copies or incorporate the information into advocacy training for child welfare advocates, including Casey staff, other private and public child welfare professionals, court appointed special advocates (CASAs), child welfare attorneys, caregivers, and youth.

Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment Education Supplement and Guidebook

Education Objective(s): 9

Mission/Purpose: To help prepare youth age 8 to 21 for successful adulthood by providing assessments of their education progress and skills and identifying activities and approaches for dealing with any education deficiencies they may have.

Target Population: Professionals, caregivers, educators, and social service personnel working with all youth, regardless of living circumstances. This includes youth in foster care, one-parent homes, group homes, and other living situations.

Description: The *Education Supplement to the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment* and *Guidebook* will be used for assessing a youth's academic skills, education progress, and the supports and barriers to the youth's progress. Both parts are currently under development and will be available by December 2004.

The supplement will have separate education assessments for elementary, middle school, and high school youth and, at each of these levels, both a caregiver version and a youth self-report version. There will also be a single self-report version for youth in postsecondary education and training. The assessments will cover school behavior and school climate; academic skills, attitudes, and accomplishments; academic supports; school relationships; problem-solving skills; transition; special education/disabilities; cultural factors; and barriers to academic success.

An instructional *Guidebook* will be added to the current *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment* to provide tools and strategies for dealing with any shortcomings identified in the education assessment(s) and for promoting a youth's education progress.

Using the *Education Supplement* will be free of charge. A person will be able to download it from the Web, perform the appropriate assessment, and return the assessment to Casey, who will score and return the results to the user.

How You Can Use This Resource

- When the *Education Supplement* becomes available, have the youth and caregiver complete their respective versions for the youth in care. Use the results and the recommendations in the *Guidebook* for education planning for the youth.

- Share results of the assessment with the youth's counselor and teachers. Collaborate with the youth to develop a plan for developing skills or setting goals in needed areas.

- Tell local social work and education agencies about the *Education Supplement* and how it can help them in their work with youth in out-of-home care and emancipated youth.

Contact(s)

To download the resources: www.caseylifeskills.org

For more information: John Emerson, Senior Manager of Education, Casey Family Programs—Headquarters, 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109-3542, (206) 282-7300, jemerson@casey.org, www.casey.org

Contact(s)

Judge Patricia Martin Bishop, Circuit Court of Cook County, Child Protection Division, 1100 South Hamilton Avenue, Room 8004, Chicago, IL 60612, (312) 433-4756

Debbie Staub, Education Coordinator, Permanency Team, Casey Family Programs—Headquarters, 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109, (206) 282-7300, dstaub@casey.org, www.casey.org

Benchmark Permanency Hearing Program

Education Objective(s): 10

Mission/Purpose: To ensure that teen wards of the state will be prepared for adulthood when they leave state care. To provide a national model to address the education and professional needs of dependent youth.

Target Population: Teenage youth in state care in Cook County, Illinois, who are emancipating to independent living

Description:

This program was developed in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois; similar programs may exist elsewhere in the country. In this program, special permanency hearings for teens are held at certain milestones ("benchmarks") in the life and/or case of the youth. The hearings are held in an informal setting, such as the judge's chambers, and the youth is present with a supportive adult that the youth has selected. Other participants include the youth's social workers, attorneys for the youth, and individuals who can provide pertinent information, such as public school officials.

The hearings involve the youth in assessing his or her strengths and needs, developing a plan for transition to adulthood and independence, and lining up future community and individual support. Education and career services are included in the planning. The hearings are designed to focus on the youth's perspective and to be supportive of him or her. Progress on the youth's plans is monitored through regularly scheduled court hearings.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Call the contacts below to obtain updated information on the project, its outcomes, and its availability for replication. Collaborate with local family courts to develop a similar program.

California Assembly Bill 490, "Helping Foster Children Make the Grade"

Education Objective(s): 2

Mission/Purpose: To improve the education outcomes of youth in foster care through a variety of key provisions.

Target Population: Youth in foster care in California

Description: California Assembly Bill (AB) 490 is a comprehensive in-care youth education reform bill from 2003 that became law in early 2004. It ensures that all students in foster care have the opportunity to meet the same challenging state academic achievement standards to which other students are held—regardless of whether the in-care youth are enrolled in a public or nonpublic school. The bill requires that youth in foster care be enrolled in a comprehensive public school whenever possible and that school districts designate an education liaison to ensure appropriate enrollment, placement, and checkout of students in foster care who are in homeless situations, such as in shelter care or awaiting placement. In addition, AB 490 allows youth in foster care to continue their education in their current school for the duration of the school year, except in specified circumstances. Some of the key provisions in this bill include:

- If there is a dispute regarding school placement, a youth in foster care has the right to remain in the school of origin pending resolution of the dispute.
- A youth in foster care may be enrolled in school even if all typically required records are not immediately available.
- Youth in foster care will not be penalized for absences due to placement changes, court appearances, or related court-ordered activity.
- County placing agencies must promote education stability by considering proximity to the youth's current school when making home placement decisions.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Find out if your state has similar legislation, and educate people about how they can support the key provisions.
- If similar legislation is not available, find out who in your state and community might be involved in promoting such legislation, and provide them with data and outcomes around these issues.

Contact(s)

Kathy Dresslar, Legislative Director to California Assemblymember Darrell Steinberg, State Capitol, Room 2114, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 310-2009, kathryn.dresslar@asm.ca.gov

Contact(s)

Berkeley Harris, Campus Peer Mentoring Project Manager, Community College Foundation, Human Development and Youth Services—Los Angeles, 3530 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 610, Los Angeles, CA 90010, (213) 427-6910, bharris@communitycollege.org, HDYS@communitycollege.org, www.communitycollege.org

Campus Peer Mentoring Project

Education Objective(s): 10

Mission/Purpose: To provide academic and personal support to in-care and emancipated youth who are entering community college, including assistance in applying for admission and financial aid.

Target Population: Youth formerly in foster care currently at Mt. San Antonio College and Los Angeles City College (both in Los Angeles, California), and area youth in foster care who are interested in enrolling in one of the colleges

Description: This program of the Community College Foundation in California pairs youth currently or formerly in foster care who are entering community college with second-year student mentors who have also been in foster care. Using a specially developed curriculum, the mentors provide academic and personal support as the youth make the transition to college life. Campus Peer Mentoring staff provide technical assistance to support the mentoring relationships and track the retention rates of students. They also coordinate with Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services to facilitate outreach to foster youth and assist them with applying for admissions and financial aid. At the Mt. San Antonio campus, youth have access to a specialized support center where they can meet with mentors and study.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Contact the project staff and/or the Human Development and Youth Services division of the Community College Foundation for more detailed information. Explore the possibility of creating a similar model for local community colleges in collaboration with your Independent Living/Chafee program (see ***John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program***, page 96).

CASA Education Advocacy Programs

Education Objective(s): 5

Mission/Purpose: To train court-appointed special advocates (CASAs) to advocate more effectively in court and schools on behalf of a youth's specific education needs, with the intent to improve the education outcomes of the youth they represent.

Target Population: CASA volunteers (community-based volunteers who advocate in juvenile and family court for a youth's best interests)

Description: The three local and state CASA programs described here have been at the forefront of a growing effort to add education advocacy to the role of the CASA volunteer:

- *Washington State CASA Education Advocacy Project*—With support from the Stuart Foundation, this project, currently in progress, has hired a consultant for three tasks: first, to determine how CASA volunteers are ensuring that youth are not falling through the cracks educationally; second, to identify actions CASAs might take regarding education advocacy; and third, to compile a list of resources for CASA volunteers to use in education advocacy. This information will be incorporated into a training manual for CASA volunteers in Washington state.

- *CASA of Humboldt County, California*—This group has developed an education advocacy manual that contains information on how to identify youth who have education needs and how to access services to meet these needs. It also addresses youth's education rights, school district and service agency responsibilities, and community education resources. This CASA is interested in identifying strategies for promoting the education progress of youth in out-of-home care.

- *CASA of Pima County, Arizona*—Calling on the help of a Casey education specialist from Casey's Tucson office, Pima County CASA volunteers were trained in the education challenges of youth in care and in advocating for their education interests in school and in the courts. The Casey staff used the ***Endless Dreams Training and Video*** (see page 89) and the ***K–12 School Placement Guide*** (see page 98) in the training.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Consult with local and/or state CASA staff about their interest in training CASA volunteers in education advocacy. As needed, provide training using the ***Endless Dreams Training and Video*** (see page 89), the ***K–12 School Placement Guide*** (see page 98), or ***Make a Difference in a Child's Life*** and ***Toolkit for Change*** (see page 99).

- Download the Humboldt County guide, Working Together: A Guide to Educational Advocacy, available at www.humboldtcasa.org/advocacy. Include this in education advocacy training with caregivers, social workers, and youth.

Contact(s)

Washington State CASA, 603 Stewart Street, Suite 206, Seattle, WA 98101, (206) 667-9716, (800) 530-0045, info@washingtonstatecasa.org, www.washingtonstatecasa.org

CASA of Humboldt County, 2356 Myrtle Street, Eureka, CA 95501, (707) 443-3197, www.humboldtcasa.org

CASA of Pima County, Pima County Juvenile Court Center, 2225 East Ajo Way, Tucson, AZ 85713-6295, (520) 740-2060, www.supreme.state.az.us/casa/

National CASA Association, 100 West Harrison, North Tower, Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98119, (800) 628-3233, www.nationalcasa.org

Contact(s)

Orphan Foundation of America, Tall Oaks Village Center, 12020-D North Shore Drive, Reston, VA 20190-4977,
(571) 203-0270,
help@orphan.org,
www.orphan.org

Casey Family Scholars Program of the Orphan Foundation of America

Education Objective(s): 6 and10

Mission/Purpose: To provide scholarships to youth currently or formerly youth in foster care and to provide ongoing support for their college success.

Target Population: Young people who wish to enroll in postsecondary education, are under age 25, have spent at least 12 months in foster care, and have not been subsequently adopted

Description: The Casey Family Scholars Program is funded by Casey and administered by the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA). The program provides scholarships of up to $10,000 to young people for postsecondary education, including vocational or technical training. Scholarships are renewable each year based on satisfactory progress and financial need. Participants in this program receive ongoing support through a toll-free number and regular e-mail contact with an adult mentor from OFA's ***vMentor Program*** (see page 119).

How You Can Use This Resource

- Check that local and state public and private child welfare agencies have updated information on the program.
- Provide information about the program to local high school guidance offices.

College Bridge Programs

Education Objective(s): 10

Mission/Purpose: To offer college-level curricular options to high school students and encourage youth to complete high school, while creating a relatively seamless transition to postsecondary education.

Target Population: High-achieving high school youth and at-risk or dropout youth

Description: College bridge programs (also called dual-enrollment programs) encompass a range of programs that (1) offer postsecondary courses at minimal or no cost to students; (2) allow credits to be applied to both high school and college completion; and (3) have few limits on the number of credits a student can take. The traditional purpose of dual enrollment has been to offer more rigorous, college-level curricular options to high-achieving high school students. However, dual-enrollment programs now also target at-risk youth, with the goals of improving their basic skills, allowing them to earn high school diplomas, and linking them with career training programs.

The major source of financial backing for college bridge programs is Average Daily Attendance funding—federal, state, and local aid to schools based on enrollment. The following noteworthy college bridge programs specifically target at-risk youth who are in and out of school:

- *Diploma Plus*—This Massachusetts program offers basic skills instruction and combines nontraditional high school classes with community college course work. An evaluation conducted in 2001 by Jobs for the Future found that 70 percent of *Diploma Plus* students move on to postsecondary education and careers. *Diploma Plus* is one of 100 programs named to the Promising and Effective Practices Network of the National Youth Employment Coalition.

- *Washington State Puget Sound Pathways Network (PATHNET)*—This two-phase program is a collaboration among six community colleges in the Puget Sound area, the Workforce Strategy Center, and public agencies in Washington state. The first phase combines basic skills instruction, paid work experience, and case management at community colleges and other community sites. In the second phase, students enter specific training programs in information technology, diversified manufacturing, or health occupations.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Explore college bridge programs in your state and the opportunities they might offer to youth in out-of-home care in your area.

- Make information on college bridge programs for at-risk youth available to caregivers, youth, and public and private child welfare agencies in your area.

- Collaborate with the Workforce Strategy Center and local community colleges to establish a college bridge program targeting at-risk youth, using the *Diploma Plus* or PATHNET model.

Contact(s)

Diploma Plus: Center for Youth Development and Education, Commonwealth Corporation, The Schrafft Center, 529 Main Street, Suite 110, Boston, MA 02129, (617) 727-8158, (800) 439-0183, www.commcorp.org

College bridge programs or PATHNET: Workforce Strategy Center—New York, 678 East 22d Street, Brooklyn, NY 11210, (718) 434-4790, www.workforcestrategy.org

Contact(s)

John Emerson, Senior Manager of Education, Casey Family Programs—Headquarters, 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109, (206) 282-7300, jemerson@casey.org, www.casey.org

Continuing Education and Job Training

Education Objective(s): 10

Mission/Purpose: To provide financial assistance and program support to Casey youth in postsecondary education (community college, university, or graduate school) or vocational training (technical college, vocational, entrepreneurship, or apprenticeship programs).

Target Population: Casey youth in long-term foster care who meet several eligibility requirements, including being a student of "good standing" in the institution where he or she is enrolled and being a full-time student as defined by the postsecondary program or institution

Description: Continuing Education and Job Training (CEJT) is an internal Casey program that provides three-part support: a scholarship grant, continued living and health-related support, and case management and oversight. All three components are meant to assist eligible youth in gaining the skills, education, and training to be self-sufficient young adults. Tuition and financial support for college-related expenses and, to a lesser extent, personal and academic support are available to youth already in postsecondary education and training through this program.

CEJT youth work closely with a caseworker to follow a stated series of steps for participation. These include preparation for postsecondary education during high school, a formal application process, and acceptance into the postsecondary institution to which they have applied. Youth maintain a relationship with either a social worker or a transition specialist in the Casey office. Counseling and mentoring support are provided by phone and e-mail, on campus, and at the Casey office. CEJT youth are expected to complete a postsecondary education or training program and obtain gainful employment as a result.

How You Can Use This Resource

- We encourage professionals and agencies who wish to develop a model similar to CEJT for youth in out-of-home care to contact us for more information.

Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners

Education Objective(s): 8

Mission/Purpose: To promote the advancement and improvement of educational opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse learners who have disabilities and/or who have gifts and talents.

Target Population: Professionals and caregivers who support culturally and linguistically diverse learners

Description: The Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners (DDEL) is one of 17 divisions of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). DDEL is the only professional organization in the United States that focuses exclusively on the concerns of culturally and linguistically exceptional learners. The goals of DDEL include the following:

- Advocating for favorable policies and funding on behalf of culturally diverse learners, their families, and the professionals who serve them
- Collaborating across disciplines to promote services for this population
- Disseminating relevant and timely ideas and information through professional meetings, training programs, and publications
- Promoting personnel recruitment, training, and leadership development among culturally and linguistically diverse populations
- Providing technical assistance, training programs, and in-service and pre-service education
- Supporting the activities, policies, and procedures of CEC and the other CEC divisions

DDEL members stay abreast of recent advances and trends in their field through two professional publications: *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners* and the *DDEL Newsletter*. Members also have an opportunity to network with other industry professionals through professional development activities, such as sessions sponsored by DDEL at the CEC Annual International Convention and Expo, as well as at special topical conferences addressing multicultural and linguistic concerns.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Join CEC; then join the DDEL to learn more about the unique needs of this population and to network with other professionals. Likewise, educate other professionals about the unique education needs of youth in care who fall under the DDEL purview.
- Attend professional development activities at the annual CEC convention or other CEC or DDEL conferences to improve your skills and knowledge regarding support for the education outcomes of this population of students.

Contact(s)

Council for Exceptional Children, 1110 North Glebe Road, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22201-5704,
(703) 620-3660,
(888) 232-7733,
www.cec.sped.org

Contact(s)

General information on all three tools: "A Different Kind of Test," *Education Week*, September 24, 2003, available at www.edweek.org, under Archives

Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS): Ellsworth & Vandermeer Press, LLC, P.O. Box 68164, Nashville, TN 37206, (615) 226-4460, (888) 729-1697, www.pedstest.com

Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQs): Brookes Publishing, P.O. Box 10624, Baltimore, MD 21285-0624, (800) 638-3775, www.brookespublishing.com; a sample can be viewed in the *Inquiry* archives of the University of Oregon at http://comm.uoregon.edu/inquiry/archives

Child Development Inventories: Behavior Science Systems, Inc., P.O. Box 580274, Minneapolis, MN 55458, (612) 929-6220

Early Child Development Screening Tools

Education Objective(s): 4

Mission/Purpose: To promote simple and accurate identification of learning and developmental disorders, disabilities, and delays in infants and young children using high-quality, parent-report screening instruments that take only a few minutes to administer.

Target Population: All children from birth to age 8

Description: The American Academy of Pediatrics has identified three valid, reliable, sensitive, and specific screening tools for assessing the developmental progress of young children. These tests, described below, measure communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem-solving, and personal-social skills. The American Academy of Neurology and the Child Neurology Society also recommend these three instruments for screening children for autism.

The three screening tests are:

- *Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS)*—This has 10 questions, takes two minutes, and is for children birth to age 8.
- *Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQs)*—These take seven minutes each, are for children birth to age 5, and are designed to be administered at several intervals in the early childhood years.
- *Child Development Inventories*—These take 10 minutes each and can be used for children age 3 months to 6 years.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Collaborate with your state's child welfare agency to develop a plan for using one of these tools with all infants and young children in out-of-home care.
- Work with your state's foster parents association to train foster parents to use one of these tools.
- Teach teen mothers in out-of-home care how to use one of these tools to screen their children.

Education and Training Vouchers

Education Objective(s): 10 and 11

Mission/Purpose: To provide funding of up to $5,000 for postsecondary education to youth who have aged out of foster care. To increase participation in postsecondary education programs by youth who have been in out-of-home care.

Target Population: Teenage youth and young adults who are or have been in out-of-home care and have enrolled in a postsecondary education and training program. Eligible participants are youth who are eligible for services under the state ***John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program*** (see page 96), including those who were adopted from foster care after they turned 16 and those who were participating in the education voucher program on their 21st birthday and are less than 23 years old, as long as they are enrolled in a postsecondary program and making satisfactory progress toward completion.

Description: Education and training vouchers (ETVs) pay for the cost of attendance at institutions of higher learning as defined by the Higher Education Act of 1965. (This includes institutions that admit students who do not have a GED or high school diploma but are beyond the age of compulsory attendance.) The vouchers are not to exceed $5,000 per year or the actual incurred cost of attendance at the institution. The cost of attendance includes tuition, room and board, and other costs of participation in the education or training program. ETVs are federally funded through the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments of 2001, and most vouchers are administered under a state's Independent Living/Chafee program. A few states have contracted with the Orphan Foundation of America for administration services. To apply for a voucher, youth should contact their regional or state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinator.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Get information from your state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinator on education and training vouchers and how to obtain them.
- Refer all eligible youth for maximum voucher funding.
- Inform school guidance offices, local postsecondary institutions, and state foster parent associations about education and training vouchers and how eligible youth can apply for them.

Contact(s)

For a list of state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinators:
National Resource Center for Youth Development, The University of Oklahoma, College of Continuing Education, 4502 East 41st Street, Building 4W, Tulsa, OK 74135-2512,
(918) 660-3700,
www.nrcys.ou.edu/

Education Specialists/Advocates

Education Objective(s): 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10

Mission/Purpose: To improve the education outcomes of youth in out-of-home care through education case management and education advocacy.

Target Population: K–12 youth in care

Description: The role of education specialists/advocates may encompass a range of functions. As case managers, they facilitate assessments and service provision, communicate with schools about a youth's needs and progress, help with the maintenance and transfer of education records, collaborate with schools on behavior and academic plans, and assist youth with postsecondary planning. They see that the youth's education rights are protected, and they speak out for the youth's best interests. They also train caregivers, volunteers, and professionals in education advocacy, and they help youth to become their own self-advocates. Finally, they build strong working relationships with schools and other community agencies.

Education specialists/advocates are found in both public and private education and child welfare agencies. Models in addition to Casey Education Specialists include:

- ***Foster Youth Services***, San Diego (see page 91), in which the state Department of Education has placed education specialists/advocates in group homes.
- Programs of the state child welfare agencies in Texas and Tennessee, which place education specialists in regional offices throughout the state.
- ***Treehouse*** (see page 116), a private agency that has placed education advocates in regional offices of Washington state's Division of Children and Family Services.
- Various court-appointed special advocate (CASA) programs that are training their volunteer advocates in education advocacy (see page 81).

How You Can Use This Resource

- At Casey, continue to shape the role of the Casey Education Specialist, drawing on best-practice recommendations in this framework.
- Develop a collaborative program with the appropriate partner (e.g., CASA, the state or regional child welfare agency, or the local school district).

Contact(s)

Casey Education Specialists: Debbie Staub, Education Coordinator, Casey Family Programs—Headquarters, 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109-3542, (206) 282-7300, dstaub@casey.org, www.casey.org

Casey Education Specialists: John Emerson, Senior Manager of Education, Casey Family Programs—Headquarters, 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109-3542, (206) 282-7300, jemerson@casey.org, www.casey.org

Tennessee model: Mary Meador, Director of Education for the Department of Education, Tennessee Department of Children's Services, Cordell Hull Building, 7th Floor, Nashville, TN 37243-0290, (615) 741-9197, mary.meador@state.tn.us

Texas model: Regina Patridge, Department of Family and Protective Services, Well-Being Program Specialist, P.O. Box 149030, Austin, TX 78714-9030, (512) 438-4963, regina.patridge@dfps.state.tx.us

Endless Dreams Training and Video

Education Objective(s): 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, and 11

Mission/Purpose: To educate classroom teachers, school administrators, and other staff about the unique needs and academic challenges of youth in out-of-home care in order to improve the education outcomes of these youth.

Target Population: Primarily teachers, administrators, and staff of schools; secondary audiences include court appointed special advocates (CASAs), school counselors, school social workers, and resource families

Description: The *Endless Dreams* curriculum is composed of a video, training materials, and additional resource materials. This program gives trainers a framework for educating school staff members and other professional groups about this important and often overlooked population. Each training session is approximately an hour long, for a total of 10 hours.

The 10 modules cover the following topics:

- Education needs of youth in foster and out-of-home care
- Understanding the foster care system (Parts 1 and 2)
- Understanding the effects on youth who are part of the "system"
- Roles and responsibilities: Working with youth in foster care
- Improving the education outcomes of youth in foster and out-of-home care
- Indicators of systems change: Improving education outcomes at the systems level
- Education support for youth in transition
- Classwide strategies for increasing knowledge of the issues of youth in care
- Building communities that support the needs of youth in out-of-home care

How You Can Use This Resource

- Meet with district-level administrators to share information about *Endless Dreams* and to explain how to add this curriculum to their staff development plan.
- Develop action plans for implementing *Endless Dreams* as a collaborative activity among the child welfare, judicial, and education systems.
- Meet with parent groups to share the *Endless Dreams* with them—not only to inform them about the education needs of youth in care, but also to garner potential interest in becoming a resource family provider.

Contact(s)

Debbie Staub, Education Coordinator, Casey Family Programs—Headquarters, 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109, (206) 282-7300, dstaub@casey.org, www.casey.org

Contact(s)

Terri Kletzman, Program Manager, The Community College Foundation, 1901 Royal Oaks Drive, Sacramento, CA 95815, (916) 418-5100, (800) 400-5881, tkletzman@community-college.org, www.communitycollege.org

Foster Youth ePassport

Education Objective(s): 2

Mission/Purpose: To provide youth with an accessible way to keep track of important health- and education-related records while moving from agency to agency and service to service.

Target Population: Youth who are currently or have been part of the foster care system

Description: The Foster Youth ePassport program from The Community College Foundation is an Internet-based health and education data tracking system for youth in out-of-home care. It uses the foundation's ePassport "smart" card system, which enables individual youth to continuously update and track their personal health and schooling records. ePassport simultaneously updates and manages records in real-time format through a secure, patented synchronization technology. Youth data from other database systems is also securely exchanged over the Internet. The information is instantly accessible to the youth and to everyone involved in his or her care.

The benefits of the Foster Youth ePassport program, according to The Community College Foundation, include the following:

- *For youth in foster care*—reduced delays in school enrollment; complete, accessible documentation for enrolling in school or applying for work; improved medical care, such as no over-immunization; smoother transitions to emancipation
- *For government (federal, state, county)*—better records availability to appropriate entities; reduction in duplicated efforts; consistent information across organizational boundaries; ability to support incentive disbursements
- *For the education system*—faster, more accurate placement of youth in out-of-home care
- *For the medical community*—ability for medical care providers to receive summarized medical records to improve health care for youth in out-of-home care
- *For service agencies*—dissemination of accurate information among multiple agencies on eligibility for services, and what services have already been provided

How You Can Use This Resource

- Contact The Community College Foundation for guidance on purchasing the rights to use the ePassport system. Implement it locally, following the Foster Youth ePassport program model.

Foster Youth Services, San Diego

Education Objective(s): 3 and 5

Mission/Purpose: To improve the outcomes of youth in foster care through the development and implementation of a health and education multi–information system model. This system is designed to further enhance services and the coordination of activities among placement agencies, group homes, schools, and other service providers affecting the lives of youth in foster care.

Target Population: Youth in California, age 4 to 21, who live in licensed group homes

Description: The Foster Youth Services Program (FYS), a program funded by California's Department of Education, coordinates approaches to public education for children and youth in out-of-home care who live in group homes. The FYS program originated with the efforts of four school districts in 1973. In 1998 and 1999, the legislature expanded the program from the school district to the county level statewide. FYS makes services available to youth 4 to 21 years of age who reside in group homes. As of 2000, 32 counties in California were receiving funds under the program to serve approximately 11,680 students.

The San Diego FYS program, which began operations in spring 2000, has evolved as a multi-pronged effort that includes the following components:

- *Foster Youth Services Network*—a process of communication and records transfer among numerous agencies that have entered into an interagency agreement. Information sharing among network members is facilitated by a court order authorizing the release of juvenile records.

- *Foster Youth Services Information System*—a countywide database that contains placement, demographic, and health and education records for youth in foster care residing in group homes and Licensed Children's Institutes.

- *Foster Youth Services Advisory Committee*—a decision-making group consisting of representatives from school districts, the county child welfare and probation agencies, the public defender's office, advocacy groups, and group homes.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Following the example of the San Diego FYS program, bring together agencies and organizations that are willing to collaborate to meet the education needs of youth in care. Have this group assess the need for a local or state program like FYS.

- If you decide there is a need for a model of this kind, contact FYS in San Diego for more specific process, program, and outcome information. Discuss the options for replicating the project on a local or state basis.

Contact(s)

Tracy Fried, Coordinator, Foster Youth Services, San Diego County Office of Education, (619) 682-5254, tfried@sdcoe.k12.ca.us

Heidi Wackerli, Coordinator, Foster Youth Services, California Department of Education, (916) 445-5737, hwackerl@cde.ca.gov

Violeta Mora, Educational Liaison II, Foster Youth Services, San Diego County Office of Education, (619) 718-6670, viomora@sdcoe.net

Mindy Kukich, Educational Liaison, Foster Youth Services, San Diego County Office of Education, (618) 718-6659, mkukich@sdcoe.net

Contact(s)

GEAR UP, Office of Postsecondary Education, Department of Education, 1990 K Street NW, Washington, DC 20006-8524, (202) 502-7676, gearup@ed.gov, www.ed.gov/programs/gearup

GEAR UP

Education Objective(s): 6 and 8

Mission/Purpose: To increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

Target Population: Students, including youth in out-of-home care, who attend middle school and high school in high-poverty areas

Description: GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a discretionary grant program from the U.S. Department of Education. It provides five-year grants to qualifying state agencies and partnerships so these entities can offer mentoring and tutoring services at middle schools and high schools in high-poverty areas. These agencies and partnerships must be committed to serving and accelerating the academic achievement of low-income students through high school graduation.

GEAR UP grantees start providing services to a "cohort" of eligible students no later than seventh grade and follow them through high school graduation. Funds are also provided for college scholarships to low-income students. Typical partnerships combine at least one college or university, one low-income middle school, and two community-based partners. This combination enables them to offer other services such as professional development and often leads to a commitment to projects that can be sustained beyond the term of the grant.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Contact local school districts to find out if GEAR UP grants are offered in your community. If they are, connect youth to the program and resources by contacting GEAR UP site directors. Follow up as needed.

GED Success

Education Objective(s): 6 and 10

Mission/Purpose: To assist older youth who are discouraged with school and severely credit-deficient in completing the General Educational Development (GED) tests.

Target Population: Although originally designed for youth with disabilities, this program has been found to be effective with nondisabled youth who have dropped out of high school or who are at risk of not completing high school.

Description: This highly successful preparation program for the GED tests provides a comprehensive approach to understanding, preparing for, and passing the component exams. It was developed as a federally funded grant project to improve the post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. The model has three components: *Outreach*, a plan for actively recruiting appropriate youth; *Intake*, which orients youth to the preparation and test-taking process; and *Instructional Cycle*, which employs cognitive and metacognitive strategies as well as accommodations during testing to help youth work through each of the subtests. GED Success enlists the youth as full partners in the process and focuses on having youth prepare for and complete one test at a time. It also provides information on applying for testing accommodations for youth with disabilities.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Identify youth in care for whom GED Success would be appropriate. Obtain a copy of the training manual and explore the possibility of setting up a program for one or more youth, using a trained tutor to run the program.
- Collaborate with regional or state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinators on establishing regional GED Success programs.
- Collaborate with your local Workforce Investment Board (see page 121) to establish a local GED Success program.

Contact(s)

John Emerson, Senior Manager of Education, Casey Family Programs—Headquarters, 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109, (206) 282-7300, jemerson@casey.org, www.casey.org

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Contact(s)

Steve Zuber, Education Specialist, Casey Family Programs—Yakima, 404 North Third Street, Yakima, WA 98901,
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szuber@casey.org,
www.casey.org

Get SET Program

Education Objective(s): 10

Mission/Purpose: To provide transitional-skills development for youth in out-of-home care.

Target Population: Youth in out-of-home care, age 13 to 17, in the Yakima and Pasco, Washington, areas

Description: Sponsored by Casey and regional partners, Get SET (Summer and Employment Training) is a four-week transitional-skills development summer program for teenagers in care. The youth learn to develop work and study skills, develop daily living skills, increase self-sufficiency skills, and use community resources. Participating youth may also choose to spend a portion of each day performing supervised community activities, for which they can earn a daily stipend (the amount depends on the quality of the work skills demonstrated).

Participation in the program is meant to give youth the fundamental skills and confidence to:

- Manage regular schoolwork and have good study habits
- Complete a high school education or pass the GED tests
- Pursue postsecondary training, if desired
- Apply for, interview for, and hold down a job
- Research and access available community resources and agencies, including those that can meet health care, housing, and other needs
- Make responsible choices about drugs, alcohol, and sexuality, and know where to go for assistance if needed
- Be a positive addition to a team of workers
- Become a part of the community in which he or she lives

How You Can Use This Resource

- Hold a planning meeting with potential partners to discuss and share information about setting up a summer transitional-skills development program such as Get SET.
- Offer to collaborate to develop action plans for implementing such a program. Contact the Get SET Program to arrange a visit and/or request copies of curricula and syllabi that accompany such a program.
- Set up a small-scale pilot program for a summer, using it to learn lessons about what works well and what needs adjusting, then develop it into a full-scale program.

Guardian Scholars Program

Education Objective(s): 10

Mission/Purpose: To provide scholarship, academic, and personal supports that help qualifying youth formerly in care complete a postsecondary education, pursue a fulfilling, self-supporting career, and become active and socially responsible members of the community.

Target Population: Highly motivated, college-bound youth who have emancipated from foster care, age 17 to 23, who qualify for admission to California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), as a freshman or transfer student. Eligibility requirements apply.

Description: The innovative Guardian Scholars Program admits several students each fall semester to CSUF. Each scholar receives full tuition and funding for textbooks, supplies, and annual fees. Additionally, the program offers assistance in completing college entrance and financial aid forms; an orientation to university life; year-round, on-campus housing and on-campus student employment; one-to-one counseling, academic advising, peer mentoring, and faculty mentoring; a drop-in study center; assistance with off-campus jobs in a youth's career field; and post-graduation career planning.

To apply, emancipated youth must qualify for "independent student status" under federal financial aid guidelines and must be classified as a California resident by the CSUF Office of Admissions and Records. They must have also applied for financial aid by completing the required federal financial assistance form (FAFSA) by the priority filing date. Transfer students must have at least a 2.5 GPA.

How You Can Use This Resource

- For youth in out-of-home care who reside in California, refer them to this opportunity.
- In other states, collaborate with local community colleges on replicating the outreach and academic and personal support components of this program.

Contact(s)

California State University, Fullerton, Guardian Scholars Program, P.O. Box 6828 C-120, Fullerton, CA 92834-6828, (714) 278-4900, guardianscholars@fullerton.edu, www.fullerton.edu/guardianscholars

Contact(s)

For a list of state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinators and comprehensive information on Chafee programs:
National Resource Center for Youth Development, The University of Oklahoma, College of Continuing Education, 4502 East 41st Street, Building 4W, Tulsa, OK 74135-2512,
(918) 660-3700,
www.nrcys.ou.edu/NRCYD/

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program

Education Objective(s): 5, 6, 9, 10, and 11

Mission/Purpose: To fund state programs that provide independent living services to youth who are or have been in out-of-home care.

Target Population: Youth in long-term out-of-home care (to age 18) and youth formerly in foster care (to age 21)

Description: The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program ("Chafee program" or "Independent Living/Chafee program") is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, and state child welfare agencies. Funding may be applied to many kinds of education services. For high school students, these services may include tutoring, help with GED completion, computer classes, and help with postsecondary planning. For students in postsecondary education and training, education services may include assistance with tuition and ancillary needs (such as books and fees) and room and board expenses, as well as personal support services needed to remain in a postsecondary program. In some states, Chafee program funds have been used to pay for developing agreements with state colleges and universities for free housing, and for counseling support for former youth in foster care.

Youth who are currently in care access Chafee program services through their social workers. Youth who have emancipated should contact the state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinator to access Chafee program funds and vouchers.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Contact your state's Independent Living/Chafee program coordinator to obtain up-to-date, specific information on state Chafee program services.
- Clarify state guidelines for the use of Chafee program funds and services for youth in the care of private agencies, such as Casey.
- Collaborate with state Chafee programs to implement promising Casey education practices.
- Offer to collaborate with your state's child welfare agency to develop Program Improvement Plans and Independent Living/Chafee Plans.
- Develop links with the state Board of Higher Education and state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinator to explore ways to support youth formerly in care who are in state colleges and other state postsecondary training programs (e.g., scholarships for youth formerly in foster care, room and board assistance, mentoring and guidance support).

Judicial Checklist: Critical Questions and Strategies for Meeting the Education Needs of Children and Youth in Juvenile and Family Court

Education Objective(s): 3, 9, and 11

Mission/Purpose: To provide a tool to educate judges and juvenile courts about the education needs of youth in foster care and to create shared expectations within the system for education outcomes.

Target Population: Judges who work in juvenile and family courts

Description: Youth often come into the dependency and juvenile justice systems with mental health issues, learning difficulties, and crises from unstable or unsafe living situations that, unfortunately, overshadow efforts to also meet the youth's education needs.

To address this concern, Casey worked with TeamChild, a nonprofit legal services organization serving Washington state, to develop a draft checklist of questions for judges to ask to get at the root of the education status and progress of youth in their courts. Asking the right questions can lead to solutions that improve the education outcomes of these youth.

The draft checklist served as the foundation and impetus for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges to develop this national checklist for judges, to be available in September 2004. It will include key questions for judges, critical information about the issues behind the questions, and strategies for how to meet the education needs of youth and address any concerns raised by the answers to the questions. Additional legal references and resources will also be provided.

Typical questions include the following: Is the child/youth enrolled in school? Does the child/youth have a plan for getting to and from school? Is the child/youth attending school regularly? Have absences resulted in the filing of a truancy petition?

The judicial checklist will be accompanied by a Technical Assistance Bulletin from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, to further support judges in achieving better education outcomes for youth in care.

How You Can Use This Resource

- After they become available in September 2004, bring the checklist and its technical bulletin to the attention of individual judges for use in the courtroom, in judicial meetings, and in judicial training.

- Encourage judges to use the checklist and their experiences with it to meet with leaders in the child welfare and education systems to explore broader systems improvement.

Contact(s)

For information on the judicial checklist: Sophie Gatowski, Assistant Director, Research and Development, Permanency Planning for Children Department, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 50 West Liberty Street, Suite 300, Reno, NV 89501, (775) 327-5305, sgatowski@ncjfcj.org

F*or a copy of the original draft checklist:* Anne Lee, Executive Director, TeamChild, 1120 East Terrace Street, Suite 203, Seattle, WA 98122-7405, (206) 322-2444, anne.lee@teamchild.org, www.teamchild.org

Contact(s)

Debbie Staub, Education Coordinator, Casey Family Programs—Headquarters, 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109, (206) 282-7300, dstaub@casey.org, www.casey.org

K–12 School Placement Guide

Education Objective(s): 1, 8, and 9

Mission/Purpose: To provide optimal school placements for youth in out-of-home care, with due consideration for the quality of the schools and the availability of resources to support these placements.

Target Population: All or portions of this guide can be used by social workers, education specialists/advocates, youth, and caregivers for any K–12 youth in out-of-home care.

Description: The *K–12 School Placement Guide* provides a thoughtful protocol for team-based decision making on proposed school placement changes for Casey youth. It outlines a process for holistically evaluating a youth's needs and for judging how well these can be met by the current school placement versus the proposed school placement. The guide can be used for assessing any kind of school placement change, such as from public schools to private, alternative, charter, online, or residential schools, or to home school or a GED program. It also accounts for additional factors that influence placement decisions, such as family preferences, financial resources, and agency resources.

The guide includes a checklist for evaluating a youth's academic strengths and needs; personal, social, and cultural needs; and academic and career goals. It also includes checklists for evaluating school quality, programming, and services for public, private, and residential schools, home school programs, and GED programs.

How You Can Use This Resource

- When a social-work team is considering a home placement change that could also involve a school change, use the guide to evaluate the effect of the school change on a youth's education success and well-being.
- Use the guide for any proposed change in school placement, including a GED placement, to ensure optimal education placements for youth.
- Use the guide's "Checklist for Change in School Placement—Appendix A" to obtain a profile of a youth's education, social-emotional, cultural, and transition strengths and needs as these relate to his or her education placement.
- Use the guide's evaluation checklists for public and private schools to measure a school's strengths and needs.

Make a Difference in a Child's Life and *Toolkit for Change*

Education Objective(s): 3, 4, 5, 7, and 11

Mission/Purpose: To teach caregivers and interested parties the skills they need to be effective education advocates for youth in out-of-home care.

Target Population: Foster parents, social workers, teachers, court appointed special advocates (CASAs), and others who are involved in the education of youth in care

Description: *Make a Difference in a Child's Life* is a 201-page manual on teaching others (or yourself) how to advocate for a youth's education. The manual was produced by Casey and TeamChild, a private Washington-based agency that provides legal aid to at-risk youth. Chapters cover topics such as basic education rights, special education law, discipline, and resources for young people making the transition to adulthood. More than 500 respondents who received training with *Make a Difference in a Child's Life* reported feeling much more knowledgeable about the education needs and rights of youth in care than they were before the training sessions. Much of the law cited in this manual is specific to Washington state, although the special education chapters and the general advocacy resources are helpful to others around the country.

Those who would like to start a similar education advocacy program and create a manual specific to their state will find what they need in the *Toolkit for Change*. This second manual from TeamChild grew, with Casey support, out of the first manual's success and popularity. *Toolkit for Change* is both a resource on education rights for youth in out-of-home care and an organizing tool to help create a movement to improve the education outcomes of these youth. It includes a complete template and steps for adapting *Make a Difference in a Child's Life* to other states' laws.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Visit TeamChild's Web site to download
- *Make a Difference in a Child's Life* and order the *Toolkit for Change*. (Note: TeamChild refers to *Make a Difference in a Child's Life* as the "Education Advocacy Manual" on the site.) Use the manuals to start an advocacy program in your state.
- Convene key stakeholders and use the *Toolkit for Change* to help develop an action plan for improving the education outcomes of youth in care.
- Talk about this training program to organizations that provide professional development activities for resource families, social workers, CASA volunteers, educators, and so on. Offer to help bring the training to their organization.

Contact(s)

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Contact(s)

The Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute, 1203 Preservation Park Way, Suite 303, Oakland, CA 94612, (510) 835-0391, info@mafei.org, www.mafei.org

Marcus A. Foster Parenting University

Education Objective(s): 4

Mission/Purpose: To strengthen the role of parents in supporting their children's education achievement.

Target Population: Parents of children in the Oakland Unified School District in California

Description: Marcus A. Foster Parenting University is a collaborative program of the Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute in Oakland and many groups that support parents as their children's teachers. Partners include community-based organizations, parents, health care providers, the City of Oakland, and the Oakland Unified School District. The program offers workshops to teach parents important skills for assessing a child's school readiness, setting learning goals, and more.

The curriculum includes "Communicating with Your Child," "Supporting Your Child's Learning Behavior," "Managing Challenging Behavior," "Setting Limits with Adolescents," "Understanding Testing Standards," "Asking the Right Questions to Help Your Child in School," "Parents' Rights," and "Basic Computer Skills." The workshops include free meals, child care, and translators for non–English-speaking parents.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Obtain detailed information on the program, and consider purchasing the curriculum for local use. Incorporate the materials into foster parent training.
- Collaborate with a school district that is highly populated by youth in care to establish a similar parent-support program.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Education Objective(s): 1

Mission/Purpose: To help youth and their families who are experiencing homelessness, and to protect the right of homeless youth to attend school.

Target Population: All youth who do not have a fixed, regular, and adequate residence. This includes youth who are staying with friends or relatives because they have lost their housing; who are awaiting foster care placement; or who are living in emergency or transitional shelters, motels, domestic violence shelters, campgrounds, inadequate trailer parks, cars, public spaces, abandoned buildings, and bus or train stations.

Description: The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1997 enables homeless youth (including those awaiting foster care placement) to remain in their school of origin if they wish, and requires school districts to provide transportation to that school if needed. The act attempts to remove any barriers to a homeless youth's enrollment, attendance, or success in school, such as compulsory residency requirements. It also seeks to enable homeless youth to choose between the local school where they are living, the school they attended before they lost their housing, and the school where they were last enrolled. The underlying intent is to give homeless youth access to the same free, appropriate K–12 public education and services as other youth receive to meet a state's academic achievement standards.

Child welfare professionals working with qualifying youth in out-of-home care may be able to use the provisions of McKinney-Vento to keep a particular youth in his or her home school. Each case should be explored individually with the state's McKinney-Vento coordinator.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Contact your state Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youth for general information about when, and to what extent, the education provisions of McKinney-Vento have been applied to youth awaiting foster care placement. Make this information available to social workers and other child welfare professionals, with the proviso that each case is decided individually.

- In specific cases where McKinney-Vento assistance might enable a youth to remain in a home school, with transportation provided if needed, contact the state Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youth.

Contact(s)

For a list of state Coordinators for Education of Homeless Children and Youth: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 1411 K Street NW, Suite 1400, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 638-2535, www.nlchp.org

For the McKinney-Vento coordinator in your district: Check with your local school district.

For general information about the act: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, www.nlchp.org, under "About NLCHP"

Contact(s)

Chiemi Davis, Senior Director of Permanency Services (and former Portland field office director), Casey Family Programs—Headquarters, 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109, (206) 282-7300, cdavis@casey.org, www.casey.org

Neighborhood Foster Care

Education Objective(s): 1

Mission/Purpose: To place youth in culturally appropriate homes in their own neighborhoods while birth families and foster/kinship families work together to return the youth home.

Target Population:

Youth in Oregon state care in the Portland area, primarily children age 4 to 12

Description: The Neighborhood Foster Care (NFC) program was a six-year pilot founded on the belief that youth going into substitute care need systems that attend to and reduce the level of trauma they and their families experience. The trauma of being removed from home and placed into alternative care is exacerbated when youth are also displaced from their local schools and communities. NFC was designed to direct such youth into short-term foster or kinship families within their own neighborhoods, with the intent to reunify the youth with their birth families within one year of jurisdiction.

Two neighborhoods in the Portland area were chosen for the pilot program. One was a suburban and rural community, and the other was an urban neighborhood. Casey's Portland office led the model, which relied on a broad partnership of representatives from Portland's schools, medical community, Parks and Recreation facilities, mental health, alcohol, and drug treatment groups, law enforcement offices, neighborhood organizations, community groups, foster parents, and the participating neighborhoods themselves. Everyone engaged in developing and implementing the model. Each NFC site was assigned a full-time "global" caseworker who was in charge of recruiting, training, supporting, and retaining foster families for youth in their neighborhoods. By ensuring that youth in care were placed in families in their neighborhoods, the Neighborhood Foster Care program was able to stabilize school placements for these youth and help a large number of them return to their birth families.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Although this program is no longer in operation in Portland, materials are available for those interested in using the lessons of the model to create a similar program.
- Find out if programs like Neighborhood Foster Care already exist in your community, and contact them on behalf of your youth in care.

Online Learning Manual

Education Objective(s): 9

Mission/Purpose: To guide caregivers and professionals in setting up effective, high-quality online learning programs for youth in out-of-home care and emancipated youth who wish to complete their secondary schooling through nontraditional means.

Target Population: Caregivers, education specialists/advocates, social workers, and other professionals working with youth in out-of-home care. The information is also relevant for anyone interested in online learning for youth at the elementary and secondary level.

Description: The Online Learning Manual from Casey is for people looking to include online learning as an education option for their youth in care. As a complete implementation tool, it begins with an overview of online learning, including its advantages and disadvantages, costs, credit issues, and program accreditation. Subsequent chapters give very specific recommendations and steps for implementing online learning with youth who are or have been in out-of-home care. These steps incorporate many practice recommendations, such as a case management approach, youth empowerment, and acquisition of the skills needed for self-sufficiency. The importance of providing on-site supervision and a good support team for the youth is emphasized, and the manual includes an annotated list of selected online learning programs for reference. One such program, the ***Technology and Work Experience Center*** (see page 115), is spotlighted as an excellent example of how one group added online learning to their academic and career program for youth in out-of-home care and other at-risk youth.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Use the manual as a guide for setting up a program for one or more Casey youth.
- Collaborate with your local or state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinator(s) to establish an online learning center for youth in out-of-home care who have dropped out of high school or who need an alternative to traditional schooling.
- Collaborate with the local Workforce Investment Board (see page 121) to set up an online program for youth.

Contact(s)

Debbie Staub, Education Coordinator, Casey Family Programs—Headquarters, 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109, (206) 282-7300, dstaub@casey.org, www.casey.org

Contact(s)

For a list of regional centers that can point you to local Parent Centers: National Technical Assistance Center, PACER Center, 8161 Normandale Boulevard, Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044, (888) 248-0822, alliance@taalliance.org, www.taalliance.org

Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers

Education Objective(s): 4 and 7

Mission/Purpose: To provide one-stop access to training, resources, and information on serving the needs of youth with disabilities.

Target Population: Parents and caregivers of children and youth from birth to age 22 who have any kind of disability—physical, mental, learning, emotional, and/or attention deficit disorder—and professionals who work with these children and youth

Description: The nationwide network of more than 100 Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers (collectively known as "Parent Centers") is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and administered nationally by the Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers. The Alliance has one national center (the National Technical Assistance Center in Minneapolis) and six regional centers where parents and professionals can go to find the Parent Center nearest them.

Parent Centers offer a wide array of services for caregivers of youth in care who also have disabilities. The centers are usually staffed by parents of children with disabilities or by people with disabilities themselves. The staff members train and inform parents and professionals about raising children with disabilities; assist families in obtaining appropriate education and services for their children with disabilities; resolve problems between families, schools, and other agencies; and connect children with disabilities to community resources. They also provide transition services for older youth with disabilities.

The regional centers offer annual conferences, an extensive collection of publications, and bilingual/multicultural publications and workshops.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Use the Parent Center in your area as a professional resource for yourself and recommend it to caregivers as a training option and advocacy resource.

- Collaborate with local Parent Center(s) or a regional center of the Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers to address the education needs of youth in care who also have disabilities. Train their staff on the needs of these youth, and work with them to develop programs to assist the youth's caregivers. The ***Endless Dreams Training and Video*** (see page 89) could be used for this purpose.

Person Centered Planning

Education Objective(s): 5, 6, and 10

Mission/Purpose: To enlist people who are important in a youth's life and can assist him or her in defining and working toward a desirable future.

Target Population: Youth in out-of-home care and all those whom they consider important to helping plan their lives, such as friends, mentors, caretakers, teachers, and employers

Description: Person Centered Planning (PCP) is an approach that aims to expand the power that youth have to identify valued life choices, and to be supported as they develop problem-solving skills to achieve their personal goals. It was first developed for use with people with disabilities and has since been adapted by professionals working with different populations, including youth who are or have been in out-of-home care. For the past four years, Casey has been using PCP as an approach to empower youth.

Because Person Centered Planning is self-directed by the youth, it requires his or her agreement and willingness to participate. Additionally, it is critical that an "unbiased" individual facilitate the planning process, one who can avoid the temptation to""lead" or "influence" the person who is the focus of the process.

PCP has a three-phase model of instruction and support: (1) set a goal, (2) take action, and (3) adjust the goal or plan. Each phase presents a problem for the youth to solve by posing and answering a series of questions. Each phase also includes a list of supports that team members can employ to enable the youth to self-direct the planning. The youth is the causal agent for choices, decisions, and actions.

How You Can Use This Resource

- If you or your organization is interested in using the PCP process, you must arrange for proper training and/or orientation. The training generally takes less than a day. Keep in mind that PCP is not a "quick-fix" for a youth's difficulties; the process and its outcomes may take months or even years.

Contact(s)

Tim Smith, Person Centered Planning Consultant,
(512) 587-7896,
tsmith@triwestgroup.net

Contact(s)

For more information: Mike Hock, University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning, Joseph R. Pearson Hall, 1122 West Campus Road, Room 521, Lawrence, KS 66045-3101, (785) 864-4780, mhock@ku.edu, www.ku-crl.edu

To purchase the manual: Edge Enterprises, Inc., P.O. Box 1304, Lawrence, KS 66044, (877) 767-1487

Possible Selves

Education Objective(s): 5

Mission/Purpose: To increase the academic motivation of youth in out-of-home care who are struggling to stay interested in their own success.

Target Population: Teachers, social workers, tutors, and others who work with youth who are age 6 to 22, in out-of-home care, and losing the motivation to define and achieve their own goals and to do well in life

Description: The *Possible Selves* program helps students increase their motivation by thinking about and describing the future as three "possible selves": their *hoped-for* possible selves (visions of the self they would very much like to become), their expected possible selves (visions of the self they are fairly sure they will become in the near future), and their *feared* possible selves (visions of the self they want to avoid becoming). Through the *Possible Selves* process, students examine their lives and are challenged to take actions, develop goals, and make plans that will help them become strong, well-balanced human beings.

The *Possible Selves* program was developed at the University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning (CRL), in 1998 to supplement the university's academic strategies for at-risk students. In 1998, Casey began a collaborative relationship with CRL and found *Possible Selves* to be helpful for youth in care. Casey has since adapted the program's manual, *Possible Selves*, for use with its ***Strategic Tutoring Program*** (see page 112).

Research with university-level student athletes and middle school students shows that students who went through the *Possible Selves* program identified significantly more roles they hoped to play in the future than did students who participated in a traditional career-orientation curriculum. Additionally, the *Possible Selves* students identified significantly more goals in the academic and personal arenas, and their goals were much more specific than the goals identified by comparison students.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Purchase a Possible Selves manual and present the training to your youth in care in small groups or one on one.

Project Paycheck

Education Objective(s): 10

Mission/Purpose: To provide at-risk youth with an opportunity to receive mentored job training, GED instruction, case management services, independent-living skills development, connections to community resources, and ongoing follow-up.

Target Population: Youth age 14 to 25 who live in Laramie County, Wyoming, and who are not currently attending school

Description: Project Paycheck was developed in 2000 as a way for various organizations and agencies (including Casey) to work together to provide at-risk youth in rural Laramie County, Wyoming, with the opportunity to be self-sufficient. In 2002, approximately 175 young people participated in Project Paycheck for an average of 16 weeks. About 70 percent of them were youth in, or leaving, foster care.

A key aspect of Project Paycheck is to match youth with adult mentors who provide ongoing encouragement and support during the project. Youth receive training and participate in education activities in which workplace expectations and rules apply. During the work ethics course, youth dress as if for a job interview, come with a prepared résumé, and participate in several mock interviews. They also attend the county's annual Career Fair, where approximately 80 educators and employers discuss training and job opportunities. Finally, Project Paycheck provides 12 months of follow-up services, wherein case managers check in with participants once a month. Employment follow-up support may include buying tools and equipment the youth needs to keep and advance in a job; assisting with the cost of postsecondary education, financial aid, books, and living expenses; and providing free vocational training.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Contact Casey to learn more about how to implement such a program in your community.
- Bring together various agencies and partners from your community to hold a one-day forum on the possibility of developing such a collaborative effort.
- Collect data in your community to show how at-risk youth are doing in education and in the workforce, then use the information to gather support and interest from potential business partners.

Contact(s)

Cindy J. Hamilton, Transition Specialist, Casey Family Programs—Cheyenne, 130 Hobbs Avenue, Cheyenne, WY 82009, (307) 638-2564, chamilton@casey.org, www.casey.org

Project Paycheck, Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, Cheyenne Workforce Center, 1510 Pershing Boulevard, Cheyenne, WY 82001, (307) 777-3722, www.wyomingworkforce.org

Contact(s)

Scott Ackerson, Site Coordinator, Casey Family Programs—San Antonio Community Transition Services Center, 2840 Babcock Road, San Antonio, TX 78229, (210) 354-3200, sackerson@casey.org, www.casey.org

San Antonio Community Transition Services Center

Education Objective(s): 10

Mission/Purpose: To address critical developmental barriers of under-served youth by providing access to health care, housing, job training, and financial support.

Target Population: Youth age 14 to 25 who live in Bexar County, Texas, and who are emancipating from out-of-home care or have already done so.

Description: The San Antonio Community Transition Services Center (CTSC) is the "headquarters" for a broad-based community collaborative of service providers who cover the spectrum of needs for young adults emancipating from care. The services offered must empower youth by increasing their self-esteem, exposing them to positive role models and caring adults, improving their education and social skills, and providing service and leadership opportunities.

CTSC has been influential at the level of system reform. Its "one-stop shopping" approach supports a comprehensive, well-coordinated network of partnerships with communities, schools, businesses, and the youth. The center also provides system-wide services that help integrate the programs of individual partners. For instance, it acts as a central community intake center for assessing and coordinating services for youth in transition; as a fully equipped community employment resource center to help youth seek and obtain employment; and as a "base" where foster care alumni can return to seek further help and retain connections.

Youth in transition can also go to the CTSC for help with enrolling in the local community college; finding affordable housing; connecting to supplemental support services such as health care, case management, mental health services, and substance abuse assessment and treatment; and assessing and improving their lives and independent living skills.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Pull together potential collaborative partners to discuss the need for such a program in your community.
- Visit or contact the San Antonio CTSC and learn more about setting up an effective transition services center for youth in or leaving care. Develop a comprehensive action plan and carry it out.

Seattle Foster Care and Education Consortium

Education Objective(s): 1, 2, and 11

Mission/Purpose: To improve the education outcomes of youth in out-of-home care, with a specific focus on clarifying school and child welfare roles, improving interagency communication and collaboration, and initiating proactive planning and service delivery.

Target Population: Youth attending Seattle Public Schools who are in foster care and in grades K–5.

Description: One of the coalition's primary goals is to initiate the sharing of databases between the Division of Children and Family Services and the Seattle Public Schools in order to identify youth in out-of-home care, trigger a timely records transfer each time a youth moves to a new school, and report on education outcomes such as test scores, attendance, GPA, and graduation status. These goals have been outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding signed by both agencies.

The first step has been to identify students in foster care and to initiate proactive education planning meetings for them as soon as possible. (In the past, these meetings, if they occurred at all, took place only after students had experienced problems in school.) The meetings team key staff from schools with staff from the child welfare system so they can identify potential barriers to a youth's educational development and set up interventions to support the youth's success rather than failure. The gatherings are open to caregivers and older students when appropriate.

In the future, the consortium will develop service delivery and data collection systems to track students' academic progress. Two main goals will be to maintain a central database of relevant education information on youth in out-of-home care, and to develop new enrollment processes and forms that ensure that students get placement and services in a timely manner.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Assess the local and state need in your community for (1) a cross-agency consortium to address education issues of youth in out-of-home care and (2) a project to improve the timely transfer of records within and across the child welfare and education systems.
- Contact the Seattle Consortium for information on the project. Discuss options for replicating it on a local and state basis.
- After gaining internal support and approval, form a local consortium of education and child welfare agencies. Follow the process guidelines of the Seattle Consortium.

Contact(s)

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Contact(s)

Patricia Vadasy, Ph.D., Director, Sound Partners Programs, Washington Research Institute, 150 Nickerson, Suite 305, Seattle, WA 98109, (206) 285-9317, pvadasy@wri-edu.org, soundpartners@wri-edu.org, www.wri-edu-org

Sound Partners

Education Objective(s): 6

Mission/Purpose: To reduce the number of children identified with reading disabilities by supplementing reading instruction to grade-school children.

Target Population: First-graders at highest risk of reading failure, second- and third-graders below their grade level in reading, and students just learning English

Description: Sound Partners is a phonics-based program that provides one-on-one instruction in early reading skills to students who need it most. Developed by staff from the Washington Research Institute, it is designed to help others teach the early reading skills that most closely predict reading achievement. The program is available to educators, caregivers, tutors, and others who collaborate with school districts; tutoring and literacy programs; social workers; and anyone who can be instrumental in assisting with students' reading in their schools or community.

The program began in 1993 and has been examined extensively for its efficacy with at-risk readers. When Sound Partners staff compared tutored students' scores on literacy measures with a matched group of students who received only regular classroom instruction, data showed that the tutored students significantly outperformed the comparison group on standardized reading, spelling, and decoding measures. Average student reading scores at the end of the Sound Partners program have also been consistently at or near grade level over time.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Contact the Sound Partners staff about ways to bring this program to your community.
- Explore ways to fund such a program through grants, supplemental school district dollars, or No Child Left Behind funds. Hire tutors and have them trained using the Sound Partners curriculum.

State Tuition Waivers

Education Objective(s): 10

Mission/Purpose: To expand the opportunity for emancipated youth in care to attend publicly funded higher education institutions by waiving certain costs.

Target Population: Youth who have aged out of out-of-home care

Description: State tuition waivers enable qualifying youth to attend publicly funded postsecondary schools by waiving tuition and fees according to certain criteria. The terms and conditions for using the tuition waivers—such as eligibility requirements, the number of school terms funded, and the process for accessing the waivers—vary by state. For instance, some states permit tuition waivers for all publicly funded higher education institutions in the state, while others allow them only for select schools. Some states allow a youth to attend a school in any state, while others limit the attendance to the youth's home state. Some states may choose to eliminate the waivers in the future because of budgetary constraints.

As of January 2004, tuition waivers were available in 17 states: Alaska, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia. Legislation to create tuition waivers was pending in several other states. Updated information on state tuition waivers is available online from the National Resource Center for Youth Development.

Note: In lieu of tuition waivers, several states offer scholarships for youth who have been in out-of-home care. These states include Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Washington, and Wisconsin. The National Resource Center for Youth Development also has information online about these scholarships.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Stay updated on the availability of tuition waivers (or other state scholarship opportunities) in your state. Obtain specific information on eligibility requirements, the application process, and any restrictions on their use. Make this information regularly available to youth, caregivers, and social workers as youth in care begin their college planning.

Contact(s)

For current state tuition waiver or state scholarship information: National Resource Center for Youth Development, The University of Oklahoma, College of Continuing Education, 4502 East 41st Street, Building 4W, Tulsa, OK 74135-2512, (918) 660-3700, www.nrcys.ou.edu/NRCYD/ under "State by State"

Strategic Tutoring Program

Education Objective(s): 6 and 9

Mission/Purpose: To provide a customizable education support program for at-risk youth.

Target Population: This program is most effective for youth who can read at the fourth-grade or higher level. However, with accommodations, youth at lower reading levels will find its methods quite effective.

Description: The Strategic Tutoring Program includes training, resources, technical assistance, and support so that social workers, education specialists, resource families, and tutors can provide effective tutorial support to youth.

The program's primary focus is to teach skills and strategies that support learner independence. Its instructional methods are based on more than 25 years of research conducted at the University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning (CRL), which focuses on teaching learning strategies to academically underprepared students. Since 1998, Casey has partnered with CRL to bring the Strategic Tutoring Program to its field offices.

Program tutors fulfill many roles. Specifically, they help students complete the assignment at hand while ensuring that they understand the information to be learned. They teach the students effective strategies for completing similar assignments in the future. Finally, they develop a trusting, mentoring relationship with each student as a means of encouraging the student to put forth the effort required to be academically successful. This is particularly critical for youth in out-of-home care, who often face personal, social, academic, and/or transitional challenges.

Those interested in using the Strategic Tutoring Program must receive training in it first. Casey provides training for its field employees. Non-Casey employees can contact the Strategic Learning Center (SLC), a nonprofit organization originally funded by Casey. The SLC can also provide a list of partners who are already certified to provide Strategic Tutoring Program tutoring and/or train-the-trainer education.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Visit the Strategic Learning Center's Web site to learn more about the program and to identify certified trainers who can teach you the Strategic Tutoring Program.
- Visit or contact locations that employ the Strategic Tutoring Program methodology to determine its usefulness for your location. (The SLC can help you find such locations.) Talk with directors about ways to replicate their program. Hire a site director and tutors and arrange for them to receive training in how to use the Strategic Tutoring Program.

Contact(s)

For information about sites that use, or provide training in, the Strategic Tutoring Program: Mona Meighan, Director of Education, The Strategic Learning Center—Seattle, 2910 California Avenue SW, Seattle, WA 98116, (206) 760-7650, mmeighan@smarttogether.org, www.smarttogether.org

For information about the Strategic Tutoring Program: Debbie Staub, Education Coordinator, Casey Family Programs—Headquarters, 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109, (206) 282-7300, dstaub@casey.org, www.casey.org

Strategic Tutoring Program Parent Curriculum

Education Objective(s): 4 and 9

Mission/Purpose: To teach parents and caregivers how to effectively support their children's academic skills and classroom participation.

Target Population: Educators, family developers, and other professionals who work with parents and caregivers of school-age youth

Description: The *Strategic Tutoring Program Parent Curriculum* is similar to the ***Strategic Tutoring Program*** (see page 112), but focuses more on the realities of parenting and caregiving. The parent curriculum is broader in scope than its counterpart for tutors, and it presents teaching strategies that parents can apply more generally to guide their children toward successful school participation.

Topics covered in the *Strategic Tutoring Program Parent Curriculum* include how to:

- Support and teach time-management skills
- Create a positive study environment
- Assist effectively with homework
- Establish effective homework strategies
- Teach self-advocacy skills
- Motivate students

How You Can Use This Resource

- Share this resource with parent groups to gauge their interest in receiving training, then arrange training as appropriate.
- Consider including this curriculum, or pieces of it, as part of the foster parent training courses you offer. Many foster parent training curricula touch only briefly on how to support successful academic outcomes and school participation for youth in care.

Contact(s)

Lisa Walsh, Program Director, The Strategic Learning Center—Kansas, 1245 New Hampshire, Lawrence, KS 66044, (785) 331-3236, lwalsh@smarttogether.org, www.smarttogether.org

Contact(s)

For information on your state's TANF programs: Use the resource below to find the name of the TANF program and your state's social services administrator, then see your state's Department of Human Services or Department of Social Services.

For the names of state TANF programs and a list of state social services administrators: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, 370 L'Enfant Promenade SW, Washington, DC 20447, www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/

Technical Assistance for Needy Families

Education Objective(s): 10 and 11

Mission/Purpose: To provide financial supports and work opportunities to needy families, thereby enabling them to obtain gainful employment and move out of poverty.

Target Population: Low-income families, as defined by each state's implementation of the program. Note: Many youth who emancipate from foster care at age 18 and are pregnant or have children may fall into this category; kinship care families may also qualify.

Description: Technical Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. It provides federal funds to states for assistance to low-income families, and it grants states wide flexibility in developing their own TANF welfare programs. A primary purpose of the program is to fund education and training opportunities that will improve wages and working conditions for low-income families. The Workforce Strategy Center and the Center for Law and Social Policy have both pointed out that TANF can be a significant source of funding to promote education and career development for youth, including youth in out-of-home care and emancipated youth who are pregnant or who have children.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Identify the eligibility requirements and any education and training programs of the TANF programs in your state. Determine whether your eligible youth in care or emancipated youth who are pregnant or supporting children would benefit from TANF funding for education and training purposes.

- Talk with youth, social work staff, and other professionals who work with youth in out-of-home care about using TANF funds for education and training.

Technology and Work Experience Centers

Education Objective(s): 10

Mission/Purpose: To offer emancipating and other at-risk youth an alternative way to earn a high school diploma by combining online learning with team supports, and to teach them the academic and career skills needed for a successful transition to adulthood.

Target Population: Youth who are leaving out-of-home care and youth who are at risk of not completing high school in a traditional setting

Description: Although this program ended when Casey's Tacoma office was closed, it still offers a viable model for establishing an online learning program with a combined focus on academics and career development. The program operated two Technology and Work Experience Centers. Each center had 10 computers with Internet access and one or two staff members at a time. Online high-school courses were offered through the Christa McAuliffe Academy, an institution based in Yakima, Washington, that is accredited to grant high school diplomas. The program emphasized a high degree of staff support alongside a structured, self-paced learning environment tailored to the youth's needs. All learning was mastery-based, with an 80 percent mastery level required to pass each course.

How You Can Use This Resource

- If your area could use a Technical and Work Experience Center of this sort, look into funding options from state Average Daily Attendance dollars or from Independent Living/Chafee program funds (see ***John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program***, page 96).

- Explore a collaboration with a state Independent Living/Chafee program, a local school district, or a private child welfare or education agency to set up a center.

Contact(s)

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Treehouse

Education Objective(s): 1, 5, 6, 9, and 10

Mission/Purpose: To help youth in out-of-home care attain self-esteem, confidence, and their fullest potential through supplemental enrichment and educational programs.

Target Population: Abused and neglected youth living in King County, Washington

Description: Treehouse is a privately funded child welfare agency dedicated to providing enrichment and education services to youth who have open case files in the Washington State Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Treehouse's three education programs are Treehouse Tutoring, Educational Advocacy, and Coaching-to-College.

The Treehouse Tutoring program provides one-on-one educational assistance for students whose academic performance, due to their life circumstances, is far below that of their peers. Treehouse currently employs 15 Washington state–certified teachers as tutors in eight Seattle public schools and at the Treehouse office.

In the Educational Advocacy program, education advocates work with DCFS social workers, foster parents, and school staff on academic challenges facing specific youth, including attendance issues, behavior and discipline problems, special education needs, and other obstacles to school success. Advocates provide classroom training to foster parents and social workers in addition to individual advocacy coaching for youth.

The Coaching-to-College program matches trained volunteer coaches with youth age 16 to 24 to help them achieve their postsecondary goals. Youth work to identify their education objectives, break those objectives into benchmarks, enroll in school, and begin the work of reaching their dreams. Treehouse also offers up to $4,000 each year to students in the Coaching-to-College program.

Treehouse offers several other resources for youth in out-of-home care as well, including a "wearhouse" where they can obtain new and gently used clothing, toys, school supplies, books, and hygiene items at no cost. The Little Wishes fund helps support enrichment activities in sports, art, and education for these youth, and Treehouse's Summer Camps program sends youth to overnight or day camps of their choice.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Use the Treehouse model to develop a school-based tutoring program in public schools in your area for youth in out-of-home care.
- Collaborate with a local office of your public child welfare agency on placing one or more education advocates in that office, using the Treehouse model.
- Develop a volunteer Coaching-to-College program in your area, or collaborate with a regional Independent Living/Chafee program (see ***John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program***, page 96) on establishing such a program.

TRIO Programs

Education Objective(s): 6, 8, and 10

Mission/Purpose: To increase enrollment and graduation from undergraduate and graduate-level programs by youth from low-income backgrounds by providing postsecondary educational opportunities regardless of race, ethnic background, or economic circumstances.

Target Population: Low-income Americans age 11 to 27. Specific age and background criteria vary by program.

Description: The seven federal TRIO programs are educational opportunity and outreach programs that motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. As of 2003, there were 2,600 TRIO projects serving 872,000 low-income Americans through:

- *Talent Search*, which assists youth in grades 6 through 12 with college selection and application
- *Upward Bound*, which prepares youth for higher education through summer and weekend programs on college campuses
- *Upward Bound Math/Science*, which focuses on strengthening math and science skills
- *Student Support Services*, which provide tutoring, counseling, and remedial instruction to low-income students, including students with disabilities, to help them stay in college and complete their degrees
- *Educational Opportunity Centers*, which help displaced and underemployed workers apply for college and financial aid
- *Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement*, which provides research opportunities and faculty mentoring to low-income and minority students

TRIO also includes a training program for staff and a TRIO Dissemination Partnership Program to encourage the replication of TRIO practices.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Identify federal TRIO programs in your area that would be suitable for youth in care. Work with social work staff, caregivers, and youth on enrolling these youth.
- Identify colleges where there is both a TRIO Student Support Services program and students who are part of ***Continuing Education and Job Training*** (see page 84).
- Disseminate information on federal TRIO programs in your area to public and private child welfare agencies.

Contact(s)

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 1990 K Street NW, 7th Floor, Washington, DC 20006-8510, OPE_TRIO@ed.gov, www.ed.gov

Contact(s)

Michelle Lustig, Social Worker, Casey Family Programs—San Diego, 3878 Old Town Avenue, Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92110, (619) 543-0774, mlustig@casey.org, www.casey.org

Tutor Connection

Education Objective(s): 6

Mission/Purpose: To provide education supports to youth who are, or have been, in out-of-home care, and to educate future teachers about their unique needs.

Target Population: Postsecondary education institutions that will commit to educating their students about youth in care and to supporting youth in out-of-home care

Description: Tutor Connection is a collaborative effort by Casey and the California State University at San Marcos (CSUSM) College of Education. The program is intended to change the way future educators see and understand the issues surrounding youth in out-of-home care, and to provide tools for helping these future teachers competently address the youth's education needs.

To accomplish this, a Casey social worker provides a supplemental curriculum as part of a "Diversity in Education" course, which is a prerequisite for entrance into CSUSM's Teacher Credential Program. The curriculum covers topics such as child welfare issues; the impact of trauma, child abuse, and neglect on educational success; the need for professional boundaries; educational and behavioral interventions; and learning disabilities. The CSUSM students are then expected to apply this knowledge by participating in a community service project in which they provide one-on-one tutoring to a youth in foster care for one semester.

Participating education students are given a pre- and post-training "Child Welfare Knowledge Questionnaire" about their self-perceived knowledge of the child welfare system and issues pertaining to youth in out-of-home care. Preliminary analysis of these questionnaires shows an increase in their knowledge about the child welfare system, which can lead to better education service for youth in care.

Youth in out-of-home care who receive tutoring from students participating in the Tutor Connection class complete a pre- and post-tutoring assessment using Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT). Preliminary results reveal that the youth are increasing their competence in both reading and math.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Contact Casey's San Diego office for the resources to replicate this program. A comprehensive manual, forms, and curriculum can be provided to interested parties.
- Investigate a partnership with a local university to develop a program similar to Tutor Connection.
- Make presentations to faculty members of university education departments about the unique education needs of youth in care, and promote the inclusion of this topic in teacher preparation courses.

vMentor Program

Education Objective(s): 6 and 10

Mission/Purpose: To provide safe, effective online college and career mentoring and personal support to youth emancipating from out-of-home care, to enable them to complete postsecondary education and/or successfully move into adulthood.

Target Population: Youth in care, age 16 to 22, who either are receiving a scholarship from the Orphan Foundation of America or are in an Independent Living/Chafee program

Description: Sponsored by the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA), the *vMentor Program* is a national, online mentoring program that provides youth in care with personal support and academic and career guidance through their college years. It is available through OFA scholarship programs (including the ***Casey Family Scholars Program of the Orphan Foundation of America***—see page 82), or through a state Independent Living/Chafee program that has contracted with OFA to provide an online mentoring component for their youth, whether or not these youth are in a postsecondary program (see ***John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program***, page 96).

Mentors are carefully screened, trained, and matched with youth according to mutual career and personal interests. They work with youth on goal setting, strategies for success in the workplace and in school, time management, and other career-related skills. Mentors are selected from all walks of life and make a one- to two-year commitment to the program. All mentoring is done online using a secure portal, and all communication is monitored to ensure participant safety.

How You Can Use This Resource

- Talk with your state's Independent Living/Chafee program coordinator about the value of a vMentor Program for youth in care. Help facilitate an agreement with OFA for the virtual mentoring.

Contact(s)

For information on vMentor:
Orphan Foundation of America, vMentor Program, Tall Oaks Village Center, 12020-D North Shore Drive, Reston, VA 20190-4977, (571) 203-0270, vMentor@orphan.org, www.orphan.org

For a list of state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinators:
National Resource Center for Youth Development, The University of Oklahoma, College of Continuing Education, 4502 East 41st Street, Building 4W, Tulsa, OK 74135-2512, (918) 660-3700, www.nrcys.ou.edu

Contact(s)

For more information:
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration, Division of Program and Policy Development, P.O. Box 45710, Olympia, WA 98504-5710, (360) 902-7913, www1.dshs.wa.gov/

For a copy of the report:
www1.dshs.wa.gov/legrel/pdf/Leg1102/FSPR.pdf

Washington State Report to the Legislature, "Coordinated Services and Educational Planning for Children in Out-of-Home Care"

Education Objective(s): 1 and 2

Mission/Purpose: To help decrease the school placement mobility of youth in short-term foster care by focusing on the youth's needs in school placement decisions, and by identifying options and funding that support the youth's ability to stay in the school where he or she was enrolled before being placed in short-term foster care.

Target Population: Youth who have been in out-of-home care with the Washington state Children's Administration for 75 or fewer days

Description: This report was prepared in November 2002 by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services in response to a request from the state legislature. It outlines a plan to address the frequent changes in school placements that youth in care experience. The main report offers five recommendations:

- Develop a joint policy statement of the state's Children's Administration and Department of Education that calls for keeping youth in their home school whenever possible. Include an interagency agreement on confidentiality and information sharing, as well as protocols and guidelines for interagency communication.
- Develop and disseminate materials about school placement stability for youth in care.
- Focus efforts on foster parent recruitment in school districts from which youth are frequently moved.
- Establish an interagency oversight committee to develop best-practice standards related to school placement stability.
- Work with juvenile court judges and commissioners to ensure that school placement stability is considered in shelter care hearings.

Subcommittees also produced reports, including findings on practice and policy issues, the effect of confidentiality and information-sharing statutes on exchanging school records across systems, and transportation options and recommendations for keeping a youth in the home school.

How You Can Use This Resource

- If school placement mobility is an issue in your area, use the report as a resource while working with local and state school and child welfare officials.
- Review the subcommittee report on confidentiality contained in this report. Consider using a similar approach to clarify the legal guidelines on confidentiality and information sharing in your state.

Workforce Investment Act

Education Objective(s): 10 and 11

Mission/Purpose: To provide a framework for a national workforce preparation and employment system that meets the needs of businesses, job seekers, and those wishing to further their careers.

Target Population: Adults, dislocated workers, and teenage youth to age 21 who are low-income and/or face specific barriers to high school completion and employment. Foster care status is named as a barrier.

Description: The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provides federal funding to states for educational and occupational training for youth and adults who face barriers to completing their education and entering the workforce. WIA-funded youth services prepare qualifying low-income youth for postsecondary education and/or employment. Youth in out-of-home care are specifically listed as potentially eligible youth. Services can include paid and unpaid work experience, summer jobs, occupational skills training, and tutoring. One form of WIA funding is the Youth Opportunity Grant. These grants offer resources to programs in high-poverty areas in Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities, tribal reservations, and other areas, with all youth in the area eligible for the program's services.

Each state has local and state Workforce Investment Boards and Local Youth Councils that partner with youth, parents of youth, and representatives from youth service agencies. Several Casey offices collaborate on programs with these local WIA groups. San Diego, for instance, partners with San Diego Workforce Partnership and community-based organizations to provide both tutoring and mentoring services to youth. Similarly, Independent Living/Chafee programs in some states partner with WIA to provide some independent living services to youth (see ***John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program***, page 96).

How You Can Use This Resource

- Connect youth who need services such as tutoring, mentoring, and summer work experience with local WIA programs.

- Contact other Casey offices for information on how they have collaborated with local WIA groups. Explore possible collaborations to provide appropriate services in your area, such as a tutoring program, ***GED Success*** program (see page 93), or an online learning program for high school completion.

Contact(s)

Local and state agencies distributing WIA funds go under a variety of names, including Workforce Investment Boards, Employment Consortiums, and Private Industry Councils. To find the WIA agencies in your state, go to the U.S. Department of Labor's search site (www.dol.gov/dol/location.htm), click your state, and choose "Employment & Training Administration Information." A link to WIA contacts is listed there.

Section

3

Handouts and Checklists

Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care: A Selected Bibliography

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Indicators of Systems Change for Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Out-of-Home Care School Systems

Dimension	Expected Policy Change	Expected Procedural Change What procedures need to change or be implemented?	Expected Practice Change How can we see evidence of the change when visiting a district or building?
Belief	**Indicator:** Staff must be aware of the characteristics and needs of youth in out-of-home care, and the impact of the out-of-home experience as a unique part of the diversity of the schools' population. **Evidence:** Statement is written in policy manual or district documents.		
Identification	**Indicator:** Staff needs to establish a system with the state social service agency to identify youth who are enrolled in school and either are or have been in out-of-home care. **Evidence:** Statement is written in policy manual or district documents.		
Communication	**Indicator:** Staff needs to communicate regularly to ensure the educational participation and progress of youth who have experienced out-of-home care. **Evidence:** Statement is written in policy manual or district documents.		
Social Skills and Self-Advocacy	**Indicator:** Youth who have experienced out-of-home care sometimes need to be taught a specific social skills curriculum as well as to be involved in planning and implementing plans to ensure their education and transition success. **Evidence:** Staff researches the type of curriculum and programs that work best for youth who have experienced out-of-home care.		

Dimension	Expected Policy Change	Expected Procedural Change What procedures need to change or be implemented?	Expected Practice Change How can we see evidence of the change when visiting a district or building?
Referral	**Indicator:** Staff will refer youth in out-of-home care for services when there is evidence that they are not making expected educational progress. **Evidence:** Districts have a current list of agencies and foundations that support youth who have experienced out-of-home care.		
Support Services	**Indicator:** Educational supports beyond those typically provided during the school day should be provided to youth in out-of-home care when additional support is needed to ensure educational participation and progress. **Evidence:** Staff referrals are made for students to school-based and beyond-school-day programs.		
Collaboration	**Indicator:** Staff need to collaborate with social and judicial agencies and groups outside of the school to ensure the educational success of youth who have experienced out-of-home care. **Evidence:** Statement is written in policy manual or district documents.		
Curriculum and Instruction	**Indicator:** Staff needs to be sensitive to the needs of youth in out-of-home care in ways that increase learning. **Evidence:** Staff researches the type of curriculum and programs which work best for out-of-home care youth.		
Family Interaction and Training	**Indicator:** Staff must build strong relationships with families involved with youth who have experienced out-of-home care. **Evidence:** A key person is identified by the district to help families of youth who have experienced out-of-home care to identify appropriate schools and programs.		
Education Evaluation	**Indicator:** Staff must develop evaluation procedures for the educational success of youth who have experienced out-of-home care. **Evidence:** Specific evidence for all of the indicators is evaluated for policy, procedures, and practice.		

Quality Assurance Standards and Program Recommendations for Tutoring and Mentoring

Recommendations for Tutoring Programs

Tutoring Goals

- Tutoring goals should be developed jointly by the youth, tutor, caregiver, social worker, and education specialist. Goals should be stated clearly, in writing, and understood by all.
- The goals should clearly state whether the tutoring will focus on skill development, support for homework, or both.

Tutor Qualifications and Screening

- All tutors should have teaching credentials. The exception to this may be noncertified teachers with experience teaching in independent schools or qualified individuals with subject-matter expertise in a content area where it is difficult to find tutors (e.g., an engineer might tutor higher-level math).
- All tutors should have criminal background checks and child abuse registry checks. If the tutor has lived in other states, an FBI national criminal background check may also be recommended.
- All tutors should have personal and professional references that are checked by the social worker and/or education specialist.

Tutor Orientation and Training

- Prior to working with the youth, the tutor should meet with the youth's social worker, the education specialist, and possibly the caregiver for orientation. The orientation should include :
  - Information on the program and the role of the social worker, education specialist, and caregiver
  - A brief overview of the foster care system and the academic and emotional issues facing youth in foster care
  - Relevant educational assessment data on the youth
  - Relevant background information on the youth, within the bounds of confidentiality
  - Information on maintaining appropriate boundaries
  - Guidelines on transporting the youth
  - Child abuse/neglect reporting requirements
  - Guidelines regarding physical discipline
  - Expectations regarding communication with family, schools, education specialists, and/or social worker
- Training should be provided to tutors annually for purposes of updating instructional skills and giving tutors the opportunity to network with each other.
- If possible, gatherings should be arranged for tutors to discuss their experiences and share with each other.

Communication

- Tutors are expected to maintain close communication with the youth's teachers. Frequency of contact depends upon the needs of the student.
- Tutors may be asked to attend Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, meetings with teachers and counselors, and school conferences.
- Tutors may be asked to attend case staffing meetings at field offices for the youth(s) they tutor.
- Tutors should have a point of contact at the field office—either the education specialist or the youth's social worker—and should keep that person informed of any problems that arise.
- Tutors should maintain regular communication with parents about the youth's progress and any home support the youth may need for academics.
- Education specialists should have contact with the tutor by phone or in person at least once per month.
- Youth are expected to inform the tutor of school assignments.

Best Practices

- Instructional approaches used by the tutors should reflect research-based best practices.
- Education specialists should take responsibility for providing training in best practices and working with the tutors on instructional plans.

Tutoring Setting

- Tutoring may take place in a variety of settings—the youth's school, the youth's home, the tutor's home, the field office, a public library, or a community center. It is important that the setting be free of distractions and conducive to concentration and productivity.
- School-based tutoring is often preferable because it facilitates communication among youth, teacher, and tutor.

Evaluation

- When tutoring is initiated, baseline data related to the tutoring goals should be available. This could be obtained from both formal and informal assessment.
- Tutors should conduct ongoing, formative assessments of student progress toward tutoring goals.
- Youth should be involved in self-assessments and in recording their progress.
- At the end of the school year or at the end of the tutoring, a final assessment should be done.

Recommendations for Mentoring Programs

These recommendations were adapted from the National Mentoring Center. See

"Recommended Mentoring Resources" below for contact information.

Mentor Screening

Mentor screening procedures should be reviewed by legal and risk management staff of the operating programs. Comprehensive, rigorous screening includes:

- A written application
- Three references and reference checks
- An in-person interview
- Observation during training, with the option of rejecting the applicant at the end of training
- A criminal records check, driver's record check, and child abuse registry check. If the applicant has lived out of state, a national criminal records check should be done.
- A clear explanation, for the applicant, of the program's expectations in terms of time, activities, and progress reports
- A consent form signed by the applicant, giving permission for local, state, and federal records checks
- Proof of valid driver's license and automobile insurance
- Established criteria for factors in an applicant's background that would automatically disqualify him or her

Screening materials to be adapted or developed include the following:

- Mentor job description
- Application form
- Interview form
- Consent form
- Screening summary form

Matching Strategy

Match mentor and mentee according to interests. (Research shows a correlation between similar interests and successful matches.)

Mentoring Agreement

Both mentor and mentee should sign an agreement consenting to the program's expectations. Mentor expectations to be covered include the following:

- Reporting and confidentiality requirements
- Guidelines for taking youth on overnight trips and to the mentor's home
- Guidelines for appropriate conduct in the presence of the youth
- Expectations for training attendance, contact with youth and staff, and duration of the mentoring relationship
- Guidelines on gifts, transportation, and safety for activities
- Compensation guidelines
- Agreement to refrain from imposing religious or political beliefs on mentee

Mentor Training

A minimum of 8 hours of initial training should be required of mentors. Key training elements include:

- Program goals and role description
- Information on developmental stages of youth
- As necessary, information on working with youth who have ADHD or learning disabilities
- Information on characteristics of effective mentors
- Cultural awareness and diversity training
- Communication skills
- General information on attachment and loss issues and accompanying emotional problems of youth in foster care; birth family issues; and transition issues for older youth in foster care
- Strategies for building trust with youth in foster care
- Information on confidentiality, liability issues, and reporting requirements
- Crisis management
- Boundary issues
- Skills training related to type of mentoring, e.g., independent living skills and self-advocacy
- Within the bounds of confidentiality, relevant background information on the mentee

Duration of Mentoring Relationship

Mentors should commit to a relationship of at least one year. Relationships of less than three months should be avoided.

Characteristics of Mentoring Relationship

Mentors should focus first on the development of trust as the core of the relationship with the mentee. Mentors should avoid an authoritarian approach. Other characteristics of effective mentors include:

- Consistency and dependability
- Respect for the mentee's viewpoint
- Paying attention to the mentee's need for fun
- Getting to know the mentee's family but avoiding too much involvement
- Seeking and using the program support

Mentor Supervision

All mentors should receive regular, ongoing support and supervision from a staff person—either the youth's social worker or another individual who is designated to supervise the mentoring programs. Supervision should include weekly contact the first month of a match and monthly contact thereafter, in addition to written monthly reports from the mentor. The supervisor should also receive regular (at least monthly) feedback from the mentee, foster parents, and the social worker (assuming that the social worker is not the mentor's supervisor). In addition, supervision should include the following:

- A system for notifying the mentor of significant changes in the child's life
- A tracking system for managing supervision information
- Mentor training in identifying progress toward mentoring goals
- A process for managing interpersonal problems, termination of the relationship, and other such issues

Youth Recruitment and Orientation

All participation in mentoring should be voluntary. The program should be explained to youth in a positive, nonstigmatizing way.

Risk Management

Mentor program guidelines should be reviewed by a program's legal and risk management staff. Staff also need to be aware of the applicable legal requirements of their own state.

Program Evaluation

A supervisor should evaluate the relationship every three to six months, looking at these factors:

- Progress toward mentoring goals
- Degree of satisfaction expressed by the mentee, foster parent, and mentor

Content and Focus of Mentoring Activities

Depending on the goal of the relationship and the age of the mentee, a variety of mentoring activities will be appropriate. Mentors should receive some guidance on appropriate recreational, cultural, and transition activities.

Recommended Mentoring Resources

- National Mentoring Center, part of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, (504) 275-9515, www.nwrel.org/mentoring. You may want to obtain their National Mentoring Center Training Curriculum 2000.
- National Mentoring Partnership, www.mentoring.org
- Public/Private Ventures, Contemporary Issues in Mentoring, Philadelphia, PA
- Strategic Learning Center, Mentoring Program, www.smarttogether.org

Things Teachers Can Do to Support Good Educational Outcomes for Students in Out-of-Home Care

Know why Children are Placed in Out-of-Home Care

- Sometimes children and youth in care feel that educators believe they are in out-of-home care because they have done something wrong. In fact, children in foster care are there because of events beyond their control.

Connect with Child Welfare Staff

- Find out which students are living with foster or adoptive families, kinship caregivers, or in group living arrangements.
- Seek appropriate support from school administrators. Take the initiative to learn and then share information with administrators and school counselors about out-of-home care in general and the agency associated with your school district.
- Get clarity on what can and cannot be disclosed by child welfare staff. Stay focused on what you need to know to help the student in school, and get what information you can within the limits of confidentiality.
- Build your relationships with child welfare staff over time; learn from them about the system that they work in and how it can mesh with the one you work in.

Explore the Student's Academic History

- Contact the student's former teacher and school to find out about academic status, strengths, challenges, and history. Help ensure that school records are delivered to your school in a timely fashion.
- Be aware that each move a student is forced to make can delay academic progress by months, that many children and youth in foster care have a harder time learning because of their experiences, and that they may have been in educational settings in which they were not supported well because they were seen as transient students bound to be moved again.
- Invite the resource parents—foster parents, kinship caregivers, adoptive parents, etc.—to work with you in assessing the student's current level of achievement and setting reasonable goals for the academic year.

In the Classroom

- Be aware that children and youth in care generally tend not to perform as well in school as others. About 30 to 40 percent of kids in foster care are also in special education, so your student may already have an IEP or may need one. While the student may have a learning disability due to poorer maternal health during pregnancy or prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol, the enormous emotional burdens of grief, loss, and uncertainty about the future can also impair a child's ability to concentrate, learn, and acquire new skills.
- Determine the student's academic, social, and emotional level, and then find ways to help him or her fit into the class by using accommodations and adaptations to support educational success.

Please see **www.fostercaremonth.org** for more information.

- Respect the child's right to privacy. Students and teachers who do not have responsibility for teaching the child do not need to know his or her foster care status.
- Structure materials and tasks in the classroom to help the student achieve success, even if academics are a problem. Help offset the chaos in the student's life by providing structure and predictability in the classroom.
- Broaden the diversity of families depicted in the books and materials in your classroom to include foster, adoptive, and relative caregiving families.
- Keep in mind that a child or youth in out-of-home care or one who has been adopted may not be able to complete certain assignments. For example, constructing a family tree or bringing in a baby picture can be impossible for a child who has been frequently and suddenly moved or has little contact with his or her birth family. Similarly, getting permission for a special activity such as a field trip can be problematic when the current caregivers do not have legal authority to give permission.
- Consider doing a unit on foster care during May. A list of books about foster care and adoption is available on the National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning site at http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/support-and-retention/books-on-foster-care-and-adoption.html along with a section on Educational Issues and Children in Care at http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/support-and-retention/education.html.

Your Relationship with the Child and Family

- Like other students, a child or youth in foster care does not want to be treated differently, but also needs to be accommodated. Strive to ensure that the student does not feel exposed as a special case as he or she does in so many other settings. At the same time, be lenient when circumstances warrant it.
- Remember that many children and youth in foster care find it difficult to trust adults, often for good reason. Recognize your own status as a potential disappointer and work to achieve a trusting relationship over time. Behavior and attitudes intended to be caring can appear just the opposite when they have been experienced in a negative context in the past. Be patient.
- Some teachers may feel challenged by highly involved resource parents who advocate very strongly for the student. Remember that these children and youth need someone who is on their side, even if that person seems over-involved. Try to work with the energy the parents bring to their child's academic life.
- What children and youth in foster care need are strong advocates in the schools. Educators, resource parents, agency staff, and birth families can all contribute to school success when they understand the challenges and have the opportunity to collaborate in providing support to these students.

Sources and Further Information

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Please see **www.fostercaremonth.org** for more information.


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